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The church of Christ

THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST:

ITS

CONSTITUTION AND ORDER.

A MANUAL

FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF

FAMILIES, SABBATH-SCHOOLS, AND BIBLE CLASSES.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

For several years past, the Synod of New Jersey has had under consideration the matter of the more faithful training of the young. An overture from her on the subject was submitted to the last General Assembly, and by it referred to the next. One point therein urged, is the adoption of measures to secure to our children more thorough instruction "not only in the doctrines of grace, but in the principles of order which the Scriptures set forth."

Having been called by the Synod to sustain a very responsible relation to this movement, the author has been led anew to recognize the fact that no production yet issued from the press, has commended itself to the acceptance of the Church, as a satisfactory exhibition to the young of the divine authority of the system of order and principles of government which adorn the Presbyterian Church. A desire to supply this deficiency has originated the present treatise. That the attempt has been in some measure successful, the author is led to hope, alike, from the sustained interest with which a class in his own congregation has completed the course of instructions contained in the volume; and from the very flattering judgments of it which have been pronounced by eminent divines of different branches of the Presbyterian family, some of which are given below.

The learned reader may find that, on some points, the doctrines of the treatise differ from conclusions to which he may have been led, by Rabbinnic and other extra-scriptural studies. In this respect, the work has been prepared upon

the principle that the Word of God is the only safe guide, and abundantly sufficient as to the constitution and order of the Church; and that therefore, whatever on the subject cannot be proved out of the Scriptures, is to be rejected as without authority, and of dangerous tendency.

The constitution of the Old Testament Church receives special attention, because, the Church being one in all ages, it is necessary,—in order to ascertain and appreciate her organization, in the maturity of the gospel day,—that it be studied in the light of the organic principles, which were enstamped upon her at birth, and developed during the ages of her minority.

It is perhaps unnecessary to state that the Scripture proofs which are cited, are designed merely as suggestive examples, to be supplemented by the reader, from the abundant resources of the sacred volume. Should they, in any case, appear at first sight irrelevant, the solution will probably be found by reference to what is implied, rather than expressly stated in them.

With earnest prayers for the welfare of the beloved youth, for whom this labor is especially designed, the author with deference submits it to his brethren.

Woodbury, N. J.,
March 15, 1864.

OPINIONS OF THE WORK.

THE FOLLOWING WRITERS REPRESENT EVERY BRANCH OF THE REFORMED CHURCH.

FROM THE REV. DR. A. T. MCGILL, OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

"I have had an opportunity of reading in manuscript 'THE CHURCH OF CHRIST,' by Dr. Baird. The examination has been too slight and cursory to warrant me in expressing full approbation of every thing in the plan of the work and formulas of the answers given. But I am free to say, that I consider it a valuable contribution to the means of catechetical instruction, which have hitherto been so meagre in this important branch of religious tuition.

"The great principles of church order and ordinances are conveyed with simplicity, completeness, and scriptural force. What is elsewhere to be found only in vexed and polemical discussion, is here presented in that elementary, positive, and almost self-evident form of statement, which constitutes the peculiar excellence of catechetical instruction.

"High ground is taken for the Presbyterian polity; but not too high for its intrinsic importance, or Biblical evidence, or noble traditions, or beautiful proportions in the heritage of truth, for which we testify, and which we are bound to 'make known to our children, that the generation to come might know them.'

"I earnestly commend this manual to the churches.

"ALEXANDER T. MCGILL,
Prof. in the Theol. Sem., Princeton, N. J.
"JULY 8, 1863."

From the Rev. Dr. J. T. Cooper, of the United Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

"I have not reflected sufficiently on each statement of the author to justify me in committing myself to its accuracy. I can say, however, with great confidence, that the work as a whole meets my cordial approval, and I do not know that there is any position taken, or sentiment expressed, in which I cannot concur.

"I look upon this book as admirably adapted to the end designed, and well calculated to exhibit the scriptural character of the Presbyterian system.

"Joseph T. Cooper,
Pastor of the Third United Presbyterian Church, Phila."

From the Rev. Dr. T. W. J. Wylie, of the Reformed Theological Seminary, Philadelphia.

"'The Church of Christ,' by Dr. Baird, appears to me to be a work of no usual value. The subjects of which it treats are highly important, and the luminous and terse style in which they are presented embodies a large amount of information in a space comparatively small. We feel confident that all who read this work, whether or not they agree with every view it presents, will find it interesting and profitable. It is the production of an independent and original thinker, and although the subjects it discusses have been often treated before, Dr. Baird presents them with a freshness and originality which is quite remarkable. We regard the book as a valuable addition to our theological literature, and hope it may be soon published and widely circulated.

"T. W. J. Wylie,
Prof. in Theol. Sem. of Ref. Pres. Church.
"Philadelphia, March 9, 1864."

FROM THE REV. J. F. BERG, D.D., PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC AND POLEMIC THEOLOGY IN THE SEMINARY OF THE REFORMED PROTESTANT DUTCH CHURCH, NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY.

"I have examined Dr. Baird's Church Manual and have been greatly interested in it. Whilst differing from some of the views presented in it, I regard it as a valuable compend, and feel persuaded that it will be of great service to the Church.

"J. F. BERG.

"NEW BRUNSWICK, June 4, 1864."

FROM THE REV. HENRY A. BOARDMAN, D.D., PASTOR OF THE TENTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PA.

"In so far as I can judge from a cursory examination of the Rev. Dr. Baird's Catechism on the 'CHURCH OF CHRIST,' I think it admirable, both in plan and execution. Such a manual has long been needed, and the churches should give it a cordial welcome.

"HENRY A. BOARDMAN.

"PHILADELPHIA, June 8, 1864."

FROM THE REV. H. B. SMITH, D.D., PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, UNION SEMINARY, NEW YORK.

"NEW YORK, June 11, 1864.

"MY DEAR SIR:—Your ecclesiastical catechism, from what examination I have been able to give it, appears to me to be comprehensive in its plan and clear in its arrangement and definitions. Even those who may not agree with all its theories and statements will be profited by the study of it. It must prove a useful manual to both teachers and students.

"Yours truly,

"HENRY B. SMITH."

From the Rev. T. P. Stevenson, Pastor of the First Reformed Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia.

"Having examined the proof-sheets of Dr. Baird's catechism on 'The Church of Christ,' I can freely give it my hearty recommendation. While just exception may perhaps be taken to particular statements, it is still a most valuable and much needed compend of truth, admirably arranged, and clearly and forcibly expressed. Suitable for all, and promising to be of special service in the instruction of youth, it is a welcome contribution to this department of theological literature. T. P. Stevenson.

"Philadelphia, June 13, 1864."

From the Rev. J. H. A. Bomberger, D.D., Pastor of the Race Street German Reformed Church, Philadelphia.

"Philadelphia, June 21, 1864.

"My Dear Sir:—Although I have been unable to give your ecclesiastical catechism more than a cursory perusal, I feel convinced of its great value for the end contemplated. To a work so comprehensive in its scope, and dealing necessarily with many controverted points, a full and unreserved endorsement cannot be expected; nor does the withholding of such an endorsement in detail imply any reflection upon the merits of the book as a whole,—upon its general excellence. But I am happy to say, that I have found but few points on which I would differ from you. You will readily surmise that they refer to your views regarding special memorial days. This, however, is a matter of subordinate moment, and there is so much in your work that I can cordially subscribe, that it scarcely deserves to be named. The free circulation of the work cannot fail to disseminate most valuable instruction on important subjects. It has, therefore, my best wishes for success. Very truly yours,

"J. H. A. Bomberger."

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

1. THE RULE OF ORDER.

§ 1. WHAT is the rule of order for the Church?

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the only and sufficient rule for the constitution and order of the Church; beside which, the Spirit of God therein recognizes no other.

Psalm xix. 7–11; 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15; Eph. ii. 20, 21.

§ 2. What necessity is there for such a rule?

The Church is the depositary of the Word, —the pillar and ground of the truth. Her constitution and order must, therefore, exert a powerful influence upon the publication and efficacy of the gospel; so that inadequate directions here would imply a deficient instruction, as to the very means of redemp-

tion, and would leave the people of God, without remedy, to inevitable perplexity and division on the subject.

Rom. iii. 2; 1 Tim. iii. 14, 15; 2 Tim. iii. 14–17; Phil. iv. 9; 2 Pet. i. 19–21; Rev. iii. 10.

§ 3. Do the Scriptures contain systematic directions on the subject?

The instructions of the Scriptures are not given in systematic form, whether as to the doctrines of theology, or the constitution of the Church. But they furnish abundant means to enable the industrious and teachable to know the will of God, respecting the systematic order of the Church and form of its constitution, as certainly as with reference to the divine system of grace.

1 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

§ 4. How are the instructions of the Scriptures given?

The instructions of the Scriptures are given, in the exhibition of general principles,[1] in particular directions,[2] and in illustrative examples.[3]

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 11–13, 27–30. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 2–15. [3] Acts xiv. 23; Phil. iv. 9; 1 Cor. x. 11.

§ 5. What purpose does tradition serve?

Tradition may serve to illustrate the teachings of the Scriptures. But, when proposed as a rule, its teachings, if supplementary, are unnecessary and dangerous; and, if at variance with the testimony of the Word, are to be rejected, as corrupt and anti-Christian. They are, in their very nature, human; and inevitably infected with the ignorance, prejudice and corruption of their source and channel.

Mat. xv. 3, 6; Col. ii. 8, 18–23.

§ 6. What then is the rule of guidance as to the constitution of the Church?

The only safe rule is, that whatever may be justly deduced from the general principles, the particular directions, or the examples, given in the Scriptures, is of divine authority; whilst whatever may not be so deduced is unwarranted and pernicious.

Isa. viii. 20; Mat. xxviii. 20; 2 Tim. i. 13; Gal. i. 8, 9.

§ 7. What relation do the teachings of the Old Testament bear to the constitution of the Christian Church?

The Church of God is one, and the principles of its organization must, therefore, be

essentially the same under all dispensations;[1] so that the principles developed in the Old Testament are of permanent authority as to her constitution; and whatever laws or regulations were given at a former period must remain of binding obligation, until repealed by the same sanction which established them. The teachings, therefore, of the Old Testament continue to be applicable on this subject, except as they have been expressly superseded in the New.[2]

[1] Below, §§ 41–45; 133–145; Acts vii. 37–39. [2] Rom. xv. 4; 2 Tim. iii. 14–17,—"Holy Scriptures," that is, of the Old Testament.

2. WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

§ 8. What is the Church?

The Church is the society of Christ's covenant people.

Eph. v. 23–27.

§ 9. What is the visible Church?

The visible Church is the company of those on earth who are visibly associated as disciples of Christ.

1 Cor. i. 2.

§ 10. What is the invisible Church?

The Church invisible consists of the whole number of the elect, the body and bride of Christ; which will be complete at last in heaven.

Heb. xii. 23; Rev. xxi. 2, 9, 24–27.

§ 11. What is the Church militant?

The militant Church consists of those who are still engaged in the conflict with sin and Satan.

Heb. x. 32; Eph. vi. 12.

§ 12. What is the Church triumphant?

The Church triumphant consists of those who have gained the victory and entered into heaven.

Rev. xv. 2.

§ 13. Wherein are the Church visible and invisible identified?

The Church visible and invisible are identified by the common presence of the one Spirit of Christ; which, abiding in all the fulness of his glorifying power in the members of the invisible Church who have entered into heaven, dwells also in those who are yet upon earth, as a Spirit of alienation from the world, and testimony for Christ; so, inducing their separation from the world,

and association with each other, in relations of avowed sympathy, union and co-operation in that testimony; thus giving existence to the visible Church.

1 Cor. xii. 13; John xv. 26, 27; Gal. v. 16, 17; 2 Cor. vi. 17.

§ 14. What is the office of the visible Church?

It is the office of the visible Church to keep the oracles of God, and bear witness to all nations, of his whole testimony therein contained;[1] thus, to gather and sanctify the elect; to admonish and condemn the unbelieving; and, so, in each, to magnify the glory of the divine perfections, in the presence of all created intelligences.[2] This office is fulfilled by the ministration of the Word and Sacraments, the exercises of public worship and of discipline, the publishing of the Scriptures, and the example of holiness and charity.[3]

[1] Rom. iii. 2; Mat. xxiv. 14; Rev. xi. 3; Rom. xvi. 25, 26. [2] 2 Cor. ii. 14–16; Eph. iii. 10; iv. 11–16. [3] Mark xvi. 15; Col. iii. 16; 1 Cor. xiv. 15, 16; xi. 26; 1 Tim. i. 20; Luke i. 1–4; John xxi. 24; 1 Tim. vi. 1; 1 Thes. ii. 10.

§ 15. Is the visible Church designed to consist solely of the regenerate?

That the Church be competent and faithful to her testimony, renewing grace must be prevalent among her members. But individuals may be valuable constituents of such a body, and even active witnesses for God, who personally know nothing of his grace.[1] And not only does the manner in which grace is given to men render the exclusive selection of an actually regenerate membership impossible; but the Scriptures forbid the supposition that such was the design, and prohibit the attempt to realize it in practice.[2]

[1] Mat. vii. 22, 23; x. 4, 7, 8. [2] Mat. xiii. 30.

§ 16. Of whom then does it consist?

The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the faith of Christ, together with their households.

1 Cor. i. 2; Mark x. 14; Acts xvi. 15, 33.

§ 17. Wherein does the unity of the Church consist?

The unity of the Church consists,—not in the oneness of a visible organization,—but in the one baptism of the Spirit, dwelling in all the members and incorporating them into one spiritual body of which Christ is the Head;

and in the consequent unity of faith and testimony to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the spirit of love to each other, as members of one family, and heirs of one hope.

1 Cor. xii. 13; Eph. iv. 2–6; John xvii. 23.

§ 18. Wherein consists the perpetuity of the Church?

The perpetuity of the Church consists in the continuous succession, unbroken, to Christ's second coming, of a visible body of witnesses, bound together, not by the bond of a connected series of ordinations or officers, as essential thereto; but by the continuous presence of Christ, and communication of his Spirit, and consequent unfailing maintenance of a public testimony, on God's behalf, by men chosen and called of him, against the hostility of an apostate world.

Mat. xxviii. 20; John xiv. 16, 17; Mat. xvi. 16, 18; Rev. xi. 3; xxii. 17.

3. THE PRIMEVAL CHURCH.

§ 19. Has the visible Church existed from the beginning?

From the giving of the promise to our first

parents after the fall, God has always had a witnessing people in the world. But the Church did not receive distinctive visible organization, until the covenant with Abraham.

§ 20. What were the institutions of religion prior to Abraham?

Worship at stated times and places,[1] Preaching,[2] Prophecy,[3] and Sacrifices,[4] are mentioned before Abraham.

[1] Gen. iv. 3,—Margin and original,—"And at the end of days, it came to pass;" that is,—"at the end of a stated period"—the week. Ibid. vs. 16. [2] 2 Pet. ii. 5. [3] Jude 14, 15. [4] Gen. iv. 4; viii. 20.

§ 21. What was Sacrifice?

Sacrifice was a Sacrament of expiation, in which such animals as God had pointed out as clean, or acceptable to him, were slain, and the blood sprinkled and flesh burnt upon his altar, to testify and seal the faith of the worshipper in the death of Christ, as a spotless victim, chosen of God, and offered on the altar of justice, in atonement for the sins of men.

Compare Gen. viii. 20, 21, and Lev. x. 10; John i. 29; Heb. vii. 27; ix. 9–14.

§ 22. What was the origin of Sacrifices?

The Divine hand clothing our first parents with skins,—the express approval shortly after accorded to Abel's Sacrifice, and the discrimination of clean and unclean animals, and use of the former alone for Sacrifice, before flesh was allowed to man for food,—seem clearly to show this ordinance to have originated in Eden, with God himself; and, whilst the victims smoked upon the altar, their skins, clothing the worshippers, constituted striking symbols of the robe of Christ's righteousness covering their souls.

Gen. iii. 21; iv. 4; vii. 1, 2; viii. 20; Rev. iii. 18; vi. 11; vii. 13, 14.

§ 23. What was the subsequent history of this ordinance?

At first, the herb of the field being alone assigned to man for food,[1] Sacrifices were wholly consumed upon the altar. But after the deluge, upon occasion of Noah's Sacrifice of deliverance and thanksgiving, God gave him the flesh of all the living creatures for food, and at the same time attached a sacrificial significance to its use, by requiring that the blood be always poured out before eating, as being that which made atonement for sin.[2] Afterward, in the institutions of Moses,

whilst holocausts or whole burnt offerings were still retained, by far the larger proportion of the prescribed Sacrifices were eaten; certain specified portions by the Priests, and the rest by the worshippers, who thus declared their trust in the coming Sacrifice, upon whom by faith they fed.[3] Finally, upon the offering of the body of Christ once for all, the sacrificial system was brought to an end by the destruction of Jerusalem. A vestige of it still remains, in the prohibition of blood for food; which was re-enforced upon the Gentile Church, by the Council of Jerusalem.[4]

[1] Gen. ii. 16; iii. 18. [2] Gen. ix. 3, 4; Lev. xvii. 10–16. [3] Lev. viii. 21; Ps. li. 19; Num. xviii. 10, 11, 18, 19; Lev. x. 14; vii. 15–21; John vi. 53–58. [4] Acts xv. 20, 29.

4. THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT.

§ 24. What is a Covenant?

A covenant is a sealed agreement between two parties; by which one or each promises something of value to the other.

§ 25. What is a Seal?

A seal is a significant token, confirming a covenant.

Rom. iv. 11; Gen. xvii. 11.

§ 26. What were the terms of the Covenant with Abraham?

The Lord said to Abraham,—"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Gen. xii. 1–3.

§ 27. Was this Covenant ever abrogated?

At repeated interviews, the terms of the covenant were more fully unfolded and confirmed; and further light is shed on them in the New Testament. But in no respect have they ever been changed or superseded.

Gen. xvii.; xxii. 16–18; Heb. vi. 13–18.

§ 28. Who were the Parties to the Covenant?

The parties to the covenant were, on the one part, the Lord, Jehovah; and, on the other, Abraham and his seed.

Gen. xvii. 10; xxii. 17, 18.

§ 29. What were the spiritual blessings promised?

The covenant assured Abraham that Christ should descend from him,—that his spiritual seed, the children of faith, should be innumerable, that God would be a God to him and to them,—that heaven should be their inheritance,—and that salvation should be given to all nations, through his Seed, Christ.

Gen. xvii. 1–8; xxii. 17, 18; Gal. iii. 16, 29.

§ 30. Who were included in the provisions of the Covenant?

The provisions of the covenant had immediate respect to the personal household of Abraham, including his children and servants;[1] but they also embraced in their ultimate scope, the whole elect of God, of all nations.[2]

[1] Gen. xvii. 9, 13, 23–27. [2] Gal. iii. 7–9, 14, 16, 26–29.

§ 31. What were its conditions?

The only conditions of this covenant were faith in the God of Abraham, and obedience to him; and these were available as well to all others, as to the natural descendants of Abraham.

Gen. xv. 6; xviii. 19; xxii. 16, 18; Num. xiv. 11; Heb. iii. 18; Deut. v. 29; Rom. iv. 3; Heb. xi. 8.

§ 32. What relation did the temporal blessings of the Covenant bear to the spiritual promises?

The multiplication of Abraham's natural posterity, the descent of kings from him, and the gift of Canaan, were symbols and pledges of the better promises of the Covenant.

Heb. iii. 8—18; iv. 8, 9.

§ 33. Was the spiritual intent of the Covenant understood by the Patriarchs?

The Scriptures testify that the faith of the Patriarchs rested on the promises in their true spiritual import.

John viii. 56; Heb. xi. 8–16; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4.

§ 34. What was the seal of the Covenant?

The Covenant was confirmed with Circumcision, the seal of the righteousness of Abraham's faith.

Gen. xvii. 11; Acts vii. 8; Rom. iv. 11.

§ 35. What was Circumcision?

Circumcision was a Sacrament which signified and sealed the promise to Abraham, that the Redeemer should be of his seed,[1] through

whose blood the true children of Abraham should be cleansed from the guilt and defilement of sin.[2] As a seal to the promise of the coming Son, it was administered to males only.[1]

[1] Gen. xvii. 6–10; xxii. 17, 18; Gal. iii. 16. [2]Ex. vi. 30; Jer. iv. 4; Col. ii. 11.

§ 36. To whom was this seal to be given?

Both Abraham and his adult household were to be circumcised; and all the male children of his house, of eight days old.

Gen. xvii. 12.

§ 37. Were the infants capable of entering into Covenant?

Not only the infants, but the unborn, to the latest generation, were expressly included in the Covenant, and held responsible for its violation.

Gen. xvii. 9, 14; Deut. xxix. 10–21; Jer. xxxi. 32.

§ 38. Should children be thus bound, without their consent?

The Covenant required nothing but a reverence, faith and obedience to God, which is already by nature due from all; and which therefore, none can refuse without heinous sin; whilst it bestowed blessings of priceless

value, of which the recipients were utterly unworthy, and to which they had no possible claim; so that the transaction, in its relation to infants, was not merely just, but most loving and gracious.

§ 39. How was Circumcision enforced?

Neglect of the seal implied unbelief or contempt of the promises; which were, thereupon, recalled; so that the uncircumcised child,—having no claim of personal merit, and none of parental fidelity to the grace of the Covenant,—was excluded from recognition among the seed to whom the promises were given.

Gen. xvii. 14.

§ 40. Were all the blessings common to the whole house of Abraham?

Ishmael, as a son of Abraham, was covenant heir to temporal blessings, and to the means of grace; and the spiritual privileges held forth in the covenant, were as accessible, by faith, to him and his seed, as, to the son of Sarah. But the fulness of the promises as to the coming Seed, belonged to Isaac.

Gen. xvii. 20–23; xxi. 12, 13.

§ 41. Under this constitution who composed the Church of God?

The Church under the Abrahamic Covenant, consisted of professed believers, their children, and servants belonging to the household.

Gen. xvii. 13; Ex. xii. 43–45, 48, 49.

§ 42. Was this a temporary Covenant, or is it of permanent authority?

This was an everlasting Covenant, which pledged its blessings to believers of all subsequent ages and nations of the earth; and its promises and privileges belong especially to the New Testament Church. It is identical with the Covenant of Grace.

Gen. xvii. 7; Rom. iv. 11–18; ix. 6–8; Gal. iii. 7, 19, 29; Heb. xi. 39, 40.

5. THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

§ 43. What have been the principal periods in the dispensation of the Covenant?

There are three principal periods in the history of the Covenant;—the patriarchal dispensation, continuing from the calling of Abraham to the exodus from Egypt,—the Levitical, extending thence to Christ,—and the Christian, included between the first and second comings of Christ. The two former

are sometimes called the Old Testament dispensation; and the latter, the New.

§ 44. What ordinances of religion have been common to all dispensations?

The singing of praises;[1] prayer, public and private;[2] the observance of the Sabbath;[3] prophecy, or the preaching of the word of God;[4] covenanting;[5] and alms-giving,[6] have been ordinances of religion in all ages of the Church.

[1] Job xxxv. 10; 1 Chron. vi. 31; Eph. v. 19. [2] Gen. xx. 17; xxi. 33; Job xlii. 8; 2 Chron. vi; Eph. vi. 18. [3] Gen. ii. 3; Ex. xvi. 22, 23, 28–30; xx. 8–11; Rev. i. 10. [4] 2 Pet. ii. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 10; Mark xvi. 15. [5] Gen. xxviii. 20–23; Neh. ix. 38; Acts xviii. 18. [6] Job xxix. 11–16; xxxi. 19; Deut. xv. 11; Mat. v. 42.

§ 45. What offices have been common to all dispensations?

The Eldership has belonged to the Church under all dispensations.

Ex. iii. 16, 18; Num. xi. 16; Deut. xxxi. 28; Tit. i. 5.

§ 46. What was the characteristic of the patriarchal constitution?

The characteristic feature of the patriar-

chal constitution was the office of the patriarch, who embodied in his person all the functions of priesthood, prophecy, instruction and government.

Gen. xii. 7; xxvi. 25; xxxv. 1; Job i. 5; xlii. 8; Gen. xxvii. 28, 29, 39, 40; xlix. 3–27; xviii. 19.

§ 47. How did the Eldership arise out of the patriarchate?

After the death of the first Patriarchs, as the people multiplied, the patriarchal functions descended to the heads of families, in a distributive gradation of authority, determined by respect to the concurrence of primogeniture, age, and moral qualifications. Hence arose the office of the Eldership.

Ex. iii. 16; iv. 29; Num. xi. 16; Deut. i. 15. Comp. Gen. xxvii. 36; xlix. 3, 4; 1 Chr. v. 1, 2; Num. i. 2.

6. THE LEVITICAL DISPENSATION.

§ 48. What event introduced the Levitical dispensation?

The Levitical dispensation was introduced by the institution of the Sacrifice of the Pass-

over upon the occasion of the slaying of Egypt's firstborn, and the exodus of Israel.

§ 49. What was the Passover?

The Passover was a family Sacrament, in which a lamb or kid was slain, its blood sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of the house, and the flesh eaten by all the family, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs; as a symbol and seal of the redemption of Israel's firstborn from the sword of the destroying angel, and of the deliverance of Christ's people from the bondage of Satan and the curse, by the offering of his blood; and their spiritual nourishment to eternal life.

Ex. xii. 3–13; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8; x. 3, 4.

§ 50. How did the Passover affect the constitution of the Church?

The firstborn, thus saved from the destroying angel, were thereupon set apart by God as holy to himself, and invested with the priestly functions, which had, heretofore, belonged to the Patriarchs and heads of families.

Ex. xiii. 2, 12, 15; xix. 22; xxiv. 5.

§ 51. How long did this order of priesthood continue?

The priesthood of the firstborn continued

until they were superseded by the investiture of Aaron and the Levites, at Sinai.

Num. iii. 12.

§ 52. What were the ordinary officers of the Levitical Church?

The ordinary and stated officers of the Levitical Church, as appointed at Sinai, were Priests, Levites, and Elders.

Ex. xxviii. 1; Num. iii. 6; xi. 16; Deut. xix. 12.

§ 53. What essential difference is observable in the functions of these officers?

The functions of some of these officers were essentially typical, whilst those of others were pastoral.

§ 54. Who were the typical officers?

Whilst the Aaronic Priests fulfilled some pastoral duties, their office was, even in this respect, essentially typical; they originated, and were closely identified, with the tabernacle and temple service; and, of necessity passed away with that typical system of which the temple was the grand center.

Heb. viii. 4, 5; ix. 9–14.

§ 55. To what class did the Levites belong?

In the essential functions of their office,

as servants of the Priests and temple, the Levites belonged to the typical system, originated with it, and with it, passed away. In giving instruction, they acted as assistants to the ordinary pastors of the flock.

§ 56. Who were the pastors of the Old Testament?

The Elders of Israel were the stated pastors of the Old Testament Church; it being their office, to govern and instruct the people.

Jer. iii. 15; Isa. xliv. 28; Acts xx. 28.

7. THE PRIESTHOOD.

§ 57. What effect had the call of Aaron upon the constitution of the Church?

The priesthood which had heretofore been exercised by the firstborn, who were distributive representatives of the several families of Israel, was now, by an emphatically vicarious substitution,[1] vested in the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron, who were representatives,—not distributively, but in common, of all Israel.[2] The essential unity of the Church in her one Head was thus signalized and sealed.

[1] Num. iii. 39, 43, 45–47. [2] Num. iii. 10; Ex. xxviii. 11, 12, 30, 38; xxix. 44–46.

§ 58. How were the Priests appointed?

Aaron and his sons were expressly called of God, and ordained to the priesthood by Moses, who was "to him instead of God,"[1] by washing them with water, investing them with the priestly garments, anointing them with the holy oil, offering Sacrifices of consecration for them, and sprinkling them with the sacrificial blood mingled with the oil; whereupon the priesthood was made hereditary in the family of Aaron.[2]

[1] Heb. v. 4; Ex. iv. 16. [2] Ex. xl. 12–15; xxix. 9; Lev. viii. 1–30; xvi. 32.

§ 59. What was signified by the washing with water?

The washing of the Priests by Moses, appears to have signified the holiness with which the Father, by his Spirit, clothed the humanity of the Son, in constituting him our great High Priest.

Heb. vii. 26; x. 5–10; Luke i. 35.

§ 60. What was the significance of the holy anointing oil?

The holy anointing oil, poured upon Priests, Kings and Prophets, was a symbol

of the comforting, enlightening and guiding presence of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon the Son of God, in his investiture as Messiah.[1] It sealed to the recipients, a like presence of the Holy Spirit, sustaining and directing them, in the fulfilment of their respective offices.[2]

[1] Isa. lxi. 1; Luke iv. 18, 21; Ps. xlv. 7; ii. 2; lxxxix. 20, 21. [2] 1 Sam. x. 1, 9, 10; xi. 6; xvi. 13, 14; 1 Kings xix. 15, 16; Ex. xxx. 23–33.

§ 61. How were the Priests divided?

All the sons of Aaron were Priests, and qualified to perform the ordinary functions of the office; but the head, or chief Elder of the family, was the High Priest, and alone competent to fulfil its most important duties.

Heb. ix. 6, 7; Lev. xvi. 32, 33.

§ 62. What were the functions of the priesthood?

The Priests were mediators between Israel and God, whose office it was, to offer upon the altar the sin offerings and other oblations of the people,—to make intercession and atonement on their behalf,—to inquire for them by Urim and Thummim,—to teach them when assembled before the Lord, his laws

and statutes,—to judge them, in the last resort according thereto,—and to bless them.

Lev. vi. 7; vii. 7, 12; Ex. xxviii. 30; Deut. xxxiii. 10; xvii. 9; Mal. ii. 7; Num. vi. 23–27.

§ 63. What was the peculiar office of the High Priest?

Whilst the other Priests ministered, daily, in the first tabernacle or Holy Place,[1]—the High Priest, once every year, on the day of atonement, entered through the vail, into the Holy of Holies, and sprinkled the ark and mercy-seat with the blood of atonement.[2]

[1] Heb. ix. 6; Num. xviii. 1, 7; xxviii. 2, 3. [2] Lev. xvi.

§ 64. What was the design of these ordinances?

The Priests, in all their functions, were types setting forth to Israel the offices of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose one entrance into heaven and intercession in the presence of God for us was pre-eminently typified by the entrance of the High Priest, once a year, into the Holy of Holies.

Heb. ix. 9–28.

§ 65. Where were the Priests stationed?

The Priests were stationed at the sanctuary

where alone the law permitted the ordinary offering of sacrifices.

Num. iii. 10; Lev. xvii. 4, 5; Deut. xii. 13, 14.

8. THE LEVITES.

§ 66. What occasioned the call of the Levites?

The tribe of Levi, having atoned with the sword for the idolatry of the golden calf, God commanded them to be taken to minister before him, instead of the firstborn; who, as Priests, doubtless officiated in the idolatrous festival.

Ex. xxxii. 26–29; Deut. xxxiii. 8–11; Num. iii. 6–13; 45–47; viii. 16–19.

§ 67. How were the Levites set apart?

The Levites were cleansed by the sprinkling of their persons with water, and other rites of purifying; and then brought before the tabernacle, and there devoted, as an offering of Israel to the Lord, by the laying on of the hands of the whole congregation; and the offering of sacrifices.

Num. viii. 7–13.

§ 68. What were the duties of the Levites?

The Levites ministered to the Priests at

the sanctuary, fulfilling the more laborious offices there requisite.[1] A portion of them conducted the musical services of the temple.[2] Others were appointed as judges, to teach the people the knowledge of the divine law, and determine causes in accordance therewith.[3] They constituted the learned class; and would seem to have been the lawyers and scribes of the New Testament; the tribal designation occurring but three times in that part of the Scriptures.[4] With such functions and relations to all Israel, they were distributed in towns and villages throughout the nation, without landed interest, or cares of agriculture.[5]

[1] Num. iii. 6–9; iv. 1–49; 1 Chr. xxiii. 27–32. [2] 1 Chr. xxiii. 5; xxv. 1–7. [3] Deut. xxxiii. 10; 1 Chr. xxiii. 4; 2 Chr. xvii. 7–9; xxx. 22; xxxv. 3; Neh. viii. 7–9. [4] Luke x. 32; John i. 19; Acts iv. 36. [5] Deut. xxxiii. 10; Num. xxxv. 8; Josh. xiii. 33.

9. THE ELDERS.

§ 69. What were the Elders?

The Elders were the ordinary rulers and teachers of the Church of Israel.

§ 70. How did the office arise?

The office of the Eldership grew out of the prerogatives of the firstborn.

§ 71. Whence did these originate?

The prerogatives of the firstborn originated from the fact that they were the beginning of the strength of the father's house, and from their superior age, with its attendant qualifications; with ultimate reference, in both respects, to the Only Begotten Son, who is the firstborn among many brethren.

Gen. xlix. 3; Rom. viii. 29.

§ 72. What were the prerogatives of the firstborn?

To the firstborn belonged pre-eminence of dignity and power, the priesthood, and a double portion of the inheritance.

Gen. xlix. 3; Ex. xiii. 2; Deut. xxi. 17.

§ 73. Did these invariably attach to the firstborn?

The rights of the firstborn might be forfeited, whereupon they passed to the next in the order of age.

§ 74. What remarkable illustrations are there of this?

Esau sold his birthright to Jacob. Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, forfeited his right by

incest; Simeon and Levi, the next heirs, were deprived of theirs for their treachery with the men of Shechem; and the inheritance was divided; Judah, the next son of Leah, was made heir to the government; Joseph, Rachel's firstborn, received the double portion, and became two tribes; whilst Levi recovered part of the birthright, in acquiring the priesthood.

Gen. xxv. 33, 34; xlix. 3–7, 9, 10; 1 Chron. v. 1, 2.

§ 75. To whom then belonged the government, in Israel?

The government was exercised by those who combined the most eminent moral qualifications with primogeniture. It vested ordinarily in the heir of an elder branch of the family,—who was hence called, the Elder; but not always in the oldest person, nor heir of the oldest branch.

Num. xi. 16; Deut. i. 13–15.

§ 76. How were the Elders designated?

The Elders were designated by the voice of the people.

Deut. i. 13–15; xvi. 18; Jud. xi. 11; 2 Sam. vi. 1.

§ 77. How was the government organized?

In the continual growth and subdivision of tribes and families, their respective heads or elders, held the posts of dignity, as rulers respectively of tribes, of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens; not upon a scale of numerical accuracy, but according to the gradation of numbers resulting from the tribal subdivisions of tribe-families, chief houses, houses of fathers, and households.[1] Of these various grades of families or clans, the head or ruler, in his relation as representative of its ancestor, was called Father,[2] and, in regard to his primogeniture,—Elder.

[1] Num. i. 4–16; Deut. i. 15; Ex. xii. 3; Num. i. 2; iii. 24, 30, 35; xxv. 14; Josh. vii. 17, 18; xiv. 1; 2 Chron. xxxv. 4, 5.
[2] Num. xxxi. 26; 1 Chr. ix. 34; xxiv. 31; xxvi. 31, 32; 2 Chron. xxvi. 12; Ezra i. 5; Neh. vii. 70.

§ 78. What were the duties of the Elders?

The Elders were appointed to decide all questions of litigation arising in their respective jurisdictions, according to the law of God; to execute its sentence against transgressors; and with the co-operation of

the Levites, to teach the people the good knowledge of the Lord.

Deut. xxi. 18–21; Num. xi. 16, 17; Deut. i. 15, 16; xxxi. 9–13. Proofs of § 131.

§ 79. Did the Elders of Israel exercise legislative powers?

God himself was the only law-giver in Israel. The laws given by him could neither be set aside, modified, nor supplemented by any human authority; and it was the sole duty of the Elders and officers to execute the laws which were thus divinely enacted.

Isa. xxxiii. 22; Deut. iv. 1, 2; xii. 32; xiii. 4.

§ 80. What was the Sanhedrim?

The Sanhedrim was an administrative council, consisting, originally, of seventy Elders, who were associated with Moses in the executive management of the affairs of the nation.

Num. xi. 16, 17, 24–30.

§ 81. How did this body originate?

Even in Egypt there seems to have been a certain number of the chief Elders, who exercised a general charge over the affairs of the nation; and who, as its recognized representatives, were known by the distinctive designation of, "the Elders of Israel."[1] At

Sinai, seventy men thus designated were called with Moses, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, to the foot of the mount, saw and feasted in the presence of God, and were left there to await the return of Moses, when he ascended the mount to receive the tables of the law.[2] After leaving Sinai, Moses, complaining of the burden of the administration, aggravated by the frequent rebellions of the people, was commanded to bring before God seventy men, whom he knew to be "the Elders of the people and officers over them." These God endowed with the Spirit and ordained to join with Moses in the administration.[3] The style of description here used, and the incident respecting Eldad and Medad,[4] would seem clearly to indicate this seventy to have been a body of men already well known; in all probability identical with the seventy who at Sinai saw the God of Israel, and with the Elders of Israel who accompanied Moses into the presence of Pharaoh. They probably consisted of the twelve princes of the tribes, and fifty-eight others of a grade of authority next below them.

[1] Ex. iii. 16–18; xii. 21; xvii. 5; xviii. 12; Num. xi. 30. [2] Ex. xxiv. 1, 9–14. [3] Num. xi. 16, 17, 24–30. [4] Ibid. 26–29.

§ 82. What was the subsequent history of the Sanhedrim?

Whilst no significance seems to have been attached to the particular number seventy, the council of "the Elders of Israel," continued to be a recognized body;[1] and was called together from time to time, as the circumstances of the nation required it.[2] After the captivity, it was reorganized, and fixed at seventy members, and was that council or senate before which Jesus and his disciples were brought.[3]

[1] Compare Numb. xi. 16, 30; Deut. xxvii. 1; xxxi. 9; Josh. vii. 6. [2] Josh. xxiv. 1; Judges xxi. 16; 1 Sam. viii. 4; 2 Sam. v. 3; 1 Kings viii. 3; 1 Chr. xxi. 16. [3] Mat. xxvi. 47, 57, 59; Acts iv. 8, 15; v. 21; xxii. 30; xxiii. 1, 6, 15, 28.

10. OTHER OFFICERS.—THE KINGS.

§ 83. What other officers were given to the Old Testament Church?

The Old Testament Church was endowed with a number of other officers, such as Moses and Joshua, the Judges, Kings, Presidents of the captivity, and Prophets.

§ 84. What relation did they sustain to the Church?

Except the Kings, they all were extraordinary officers, sent in view of special emergencies of the Church, and were all types of the Lord Jesus Christ in the various functions of his office, as her redeemer from Satan's bondage, her deliverer from all enemies, her ruler and teacher, and her leader into the rest of Canaan.

Isa. xxxii. 22; Deut. xviii. 18; Acts iii. 22.

§ 85. What were the Kings?

According to the Levitical constitutions, God himself was the only King, or supreme governor of Israel. But the kingly office was afterward superadded to the system, and the house of David became therein the standing type of Messiah's royalty, as the family of Aaron was of his priesthood.

1 Sam. viii. 7, 8; x. 19; xii. 12; Psalm ii. 6; lxxxix. 20, 35–37; Acts ii. 25–36.

§ 86. How was monarchy introduced?

Israel having demanded a King, Samuel was commissioned to admonish them that this was a rejection of God himself from being their King; and yet to accede to their persistent request; with the provision, that their

Kings should be God's vicegerents, and that the divine law should be the unalterable constitution of the kingdom.

1 Sam. viii. 7; x. 25; xii. 13–15, 25; xv. 22, 23.

§ 87. How were the Kings designated?

God, as paramount sovereign of the nation, appointed Saul to the throne; and, upon his rebellion, set him aside and called David; to whom and to his seed he gave the kingdom by a perpetual covenant.

1 Sam. ix. 16; xv. 23; xvi. 12, 13; 2 Sam. vii. 16; Ps. lxxxix. 4.

§ 88. How were the Kings set apart?

The Kings were set apart to their office by anointing them with the holy oil.

1 Sam. x. 1; xvi. 12, 13; 1 Kings i. 34, 39; 2 Kings ix. 6; xi. 12; Above, § 60.

§ 89. What was the function of the Kings?

The Kings were executive officers, whose authority was strictly limited to the enforcing of the law of God, which they could neither change nor set aside.[1] They were also the commanders of the armies for the defense of Israel and the execution of the divine judgments upon her enemies.[2]

[1] Deut. xvii. 14–20; 1 Sam. xv. 22, 23;

1 Kings ii. 1–4; 1 Chr. xxii. 12, 13; xxviii. 5, 7; xxix. 19; 1 Kings xi. 11, 33–38. [2] 1 Sam. ix. 16; x. 1; xv. 1–3.

§ 90. Were any of these offices purely secular?

Israel was a holy nation, a kingdom of priests, whose very existence was founded in the Abrahamic covenant, fidelity to which was the sole and essential condition of citizenship. God himself was her King,—the author of her laws, and official superior of her officers; all whose duties were functions of divine authority, subject in every ordinary case, to revision and ultimate judgment at the tribunal of the Sanhedrim or council of seventy, where He presided by Urim and Thummim;—so that there were no merely secular offices proper to Israel.

Ex. xix. 6; Deut. i. 17; Ex. xviii. 26; Num. xi. 17; Deut. xxi. 5; Ex. xxviii. 30; Num. xxvii. 21; Jud. xx. 18, 23, 26–28; 1 Sam. xxiii. 6, 9–12; xxviii. 6.

11. PRIVILEGES OF ISRAEL.

§ 91. What privileges belonged to the members of the Old Testament Church?

The privileges enjoyed by the members of the Old Testament Church embraced the promises and seals of the covenant;—a title to God as the God of Israel; to Canaan, as the type, and heaven, as the inheritance of faith; to Circumcision, the Baptisms, Passover, Sacrifices, and other ordinances of the tabernacle and temple service; and to the social privileges, the instructions, and the worship enjoyed by the people in their local communities.

Deut. iv. 7, 8; v. 33; vi. 3–9, 24, 25.

§ 92. Did these privileges belong to all the natural offspring of Abraham?

Isaac only of all the sons of Abraham retained possession of the privileges of the Church;—of his sons, Esau forfeited the blessing, and of Jacob's seed many were excluded.

Gen. xxi. 12; xxv. 32–34; xxviii. 4; Num. xiv. 23; xix. 20.

§ 93. To whom then did these pertain?

All clean persons were entitled to the privileges of the Church of Israel.

Gen. xxxv. 2; Lev. xv. 31; Num. ix. 13.

§ 94. Who were the unclean?

There were two classes of unclean persons,

—those who were temporarily defiled with ceremonial uncleanness; and those who were permanently unclean, such as the leper, the bastard, and the uncircumcised.

§ 95. What were the provisions concerning these respectively?

The ceremonially unclean were suspended from the social and public privileges of religion, until the prescribed process of purification was accomplished; the leper, until he was healed and cleansed; the bastard was excluded for ten generations; and the uncircumcised, until he submitted to that rite.

Num. xix. 19; Lev. vii. 20; xiv. 3–9; Deut. xxiii. 2; Ex. xii. 48.

§ 96. What was the effect of these regulations?

The effect of these regulations was to admonish all, of the holiness which becomes God's house; and to exclude from the communion of Israel all whose faith was not adequate to induce a diligent conformity of their lives and conduct to the requirements of the divine law.

§ 97. Were the privileges restricted to Abraham's natural seed?

With certain specific exceptions, the privi-

leges of the Church were as free to the Gentiles as they were to Israel.

Ex. xii. 49; Num. ix. 14; xv. 15, 16; 1 Kings viii. 41–43; ix. 3.

§ 98. What were the exceptions?

The children of Moab and Ammon were for special reasons, excluded for ten generations, and the Egyptians and Edomites for three.

Deut. xxiii. 3, 7, 8.

§ 99. What then was the condition of membership in the Levitical Church?

With these exceptions,—to all alike, whether of Israel or the Gentiles, the condition of membership in the Levitical Church was one and the same,—professed acceptance of God, as their God,—implying faith in his promises, and obedience to his laws.

Ex. xii. 48, 49; Num. ix. 14; xv. 14–16; Heb. xi. 8; Rom. iv. 11–14; Ruth i. 16; ii. 12.

§ 100. What effect had the erection of the temple upon the constitution of the Church?

Upon the erection of the temple, the ark and the annual festivals, which had previously removed from place to place, were located permanently there; the Priests and Levites

were distributed into courses, and assigned to stated tours of duty; and the prescriptions of the law were more systematically observed; but otherwise there was no modification in the system.

Deut. xii. 5; 2 Chr. vi. 41; vii. 16; viii. 13, 14.

12. THE ORDINANCES.

§ 101. What were the principal ordinances of public worship and instruction?

Beside the daily services of sacrifice and song at the temple, all the males were required to assemble there, three times a year, to observe the feasts of the Passover, of weeks, and of tabernacles,—to celebrate the praises of God, and receive instruction out of his law; the whole of which was read publicly every seventh year, in the year of release, at the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel, men, women and children, were required to be present.

Deut. xvi. 16; xxxi. 10–13; Neh. viii. 1–3, 18; Luke ii. 41, 46.

§ 102. What were the Sacraments of the Levitical dispensation?

The Sacraments of the Levitical dispensation were Sacrifice, Circumcision, the Passover, and Baptism.

Above, §§ 21, 35, 49.

§ 103. How many kinds of washings were instituted?

There were two kinds of washings under the Levitical dispensation; those which were for the cleansing of minor ceremonial defilements, and the Baptism of purification for sin.

§ 104. Were these both Sacramental?

Only the Baptism of purification for sin was Sacramental, as it alone was a seal to covenant promises.[1] The other was a monitory symbol of the cultivation of personal holiness by the believer.[2]

[1] Heb. ix. 19, 20; Ex. xxiv. 5–8. [2] Isa. i. 16; Jer. iv. 14; 2 Cor. vii. 1.

§ 105. Wherein did the baptismal Sacrament consist?

The baptismal Sacrament consisted in sprinkling the person of the unclean with the water of separation,—which was living, that is, pure running water, in which had been mingled sacrificial blood or ashes, with scarlet wool, cedar-wood and hyssop.

Lev. xiv. 4–7; Num. xix. 17–19; Heb. ix. 19.

§ 106. Wherein did this Baptism differ from the other washings as to the administrator?

Those washings which signified the cultivation of personal holiness,—the putting away of the filthiness of flesh and spirit,—were performed by the subject himself;[1] whilst those which were symbols of gifts bestowed were administered to the recipients by others,—by Moses, when acting as High Priest,—by the Priests,—and by any clean person belonging to the "kingdom of Priests."[2]

[1] Lev. xi. 40; xiv. 8, 9; xv. 5–13. [2] Heb. ix. 19–24; Ex. xxiv. 8; Num. viii. 7; Num. xix. 19; Ex. xix. 6.

§ 107. How did they differ as to the mode of application?

All those Baptisms which were designed to symbolize grace from above, purifying the unclean, were administered by sprinkling the person; in allusion to the descent of rain from heaven;[1] whilst the others were performed by a free use of water, without direction or restriction, as to the mode of application.[2]

[1] Psalm lxxii. 6; Isa. xliv. 3; xxxii. 15, 16; Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27. [2] Lev. xv. 5–13; xvi. 4; Isa. lii. 11.

§ 108. To whom was Baptism administered?

Baptism was the seal of investiture with covenant privileges; and as such, was administered, originally, to the whole congregation of Israel, upon their exodus from Egypt, and entrance into covenant with God at Sinai;[1] subsequently, to the Levites, upon their consecration,[2]—to such as having been excluded from the communion of Israel, for leprosy, were healed and restored,[3]—to those who had been under suspension, for defilement by the dead,[4]—and to Gentiles upon admission to the Church and privileges of Israel.[5] It was also applied to dwellings, furniture and utensils, which had been defiled with the dead.[4]

[1] Heb. ix. 19; Ex. xxiv. 6–8. [2] Num. viii. 7. [3] Lev. xiv. 4–7; 49–53. [4] Num. xix. 18, 19; xxxi. 19, 22, 23. [5] Num. xxxi. 19, 23. (Is not this ordinance the key to the meaning of Paul in 1 Cor. xv. 29?—"If the dead rise not, what means that baptism from death which implies to the recipient deliverance

from it, by the indwelling Spirit shed down as the Spirit of life, not to the soul only, but to the body also." See Rom. viii. 2, 11. That the ceremonial law, and therefore this baptism, was still observed in the Christian church, when Paul wrote this argument, see below, §§ 142—149.)

§ 109. What was the meaning of this Baptism?

This Sacrament signified and sealed the cleansing efficacy of the blood and Spirit of the slain, yet living and ascended Saviour,[1] shed down from heaven; by which are given spiritual life to the soul, purging from the guilt and defilement of sin, and deliverance, in the resurrection, from the power of death.[2]

[1] Lev. xiv. 5, 7. [2] John iii. 5; Ps. li. 5–11; Heb. ix. 19–24; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 29. Compare below, § 205.

§ 110. What meant the variations in the preparation of the elements?

The only variations between the Baptism of the congregation and of the leper, were of such a nature as were incident to the appropriate use of larger animals in the former case than in the latter. For the unclean by

the dead,—since sacrifice was unlawful, except at the sanctuary,—the ashes of purifying were provided, as containing all the prescribed elements, in a form suitable for conveyance thence to every part of the land, and for being kept in readiness for the ordinary emergency of death; and, instead of the priests, any clean person was allowed to administer it, for the manifest reason, that often there might be no priest accessible.

Num. xix. 9, 10, 18–20; Deut. xii. 13, 14.

§ 111. What mention is made of this Baptism in the New Testament?

Beside the Baptism of John,[1] the washings and Baptisms of their persons and utensils which were used by the Pharisees, would seem evidently identical with the Levitical washings and the Baptism of purification for sin, multiplied by the Pharisees beyond what was written, through an overmuch righteousness,—the latter, probably under the pretence that in the course of their walks they might unwittingly have come in contact with a human bone, or grave, or with one defiled by the dead.[2]

[1] Below, § 202. [2] Mark vii. 2–4,—In the original, the second and third verses read

"unwashen," and "wash;" but in verse 4 it is, "except they baptize," and "baptisms of cups," &c. See Num. xix. 18; Heb. ix. 10.

§ 112. What were the duties of family religion in Israel?

Heads of families were required to have their male children circumcised, at eight days old,—to instruct their households assiduously in the law of God, and in the history of his dealings with Israel,—to exercise discipline upon them and enforce obedience to the divine law,—and to take them up to the assemblies, at the three annual feasts.

Gen. xvii. 12; Ex. iv. 24, 25; Deut. vi. 7–9, 20–25; xxi. 18; 1 Sam. iii. 13; Ex. xxxiv. 23; Deut. xvi. 11, 14, 16.

13. THE SYNAGOGUE.

§ 113. What other provision was made for social instruction and worship?

The sanctity of the Sabbath, the function of the Levites as teachers, and their dispersion throughout the land, the duty of the Elders to know the law, to disseminate that knowledge, and to rule according thereto, and the duty of all to cultivate acquaintance

with the divine will, would seem to imply a strong probability that religious assemblies were frequent, in the communities of Israel.

§ 114. Are any such mentioned?

Traces of such assemblies are found in the ministry of Samuel and Elisha, in the Psalms, and elsewhere in the Old Testament; but the complete and systematic organization of the Synagogue service probably took place after the return from the captivity.

1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Kings ii. 3, 5, 7; iv. 23, 38; vi. 1; Ps. lxxiv. 8; cvii. 32; 2 Chr. xvii. 9.

§ 115. Did the Synagogue system introduce new principles of organization?

The nation had been so dislocated by the captivities that the Eldership probably bore fewer traces of the original law of family primogeniture. But, otherwise, the Synagogue system was nothing more than a stated assembly for the performance of duties which were always binding, and had from the first been fulfilled, in a more casual manner.

§ 116. What was the order of the Synagogue service?

The service in the Synagogues was held on every Sabbath day, and consisted in read-

ing the Scriptures, exposition and exhortation thereon, prayers and songs of praise,[1] conducted under the supervision of the Elders, by Levites, Elders, or other competent persons whom the Elders invited and directed.[2]

[1] Acts xv. 21; Luke iv. 16, 21; Mat. vi. 5; 1 Sam. x. 5; Mat. xxvi. 30. [2] Luke xiii. 14; Acts xiii. 15.

§ 117. What was the constitution of the Synagogue Eldership?

The Eldership of the Synagogue consisted of the ordinary Elders of the vicinage; over whom, when assembled, one presided as chief ruler.

Deut. xxi. 6; Ruth iv. 2; Mark v. 22; Acts xiii. 15; xviii. 8, 17.

§ 118. What were the prerogatives of the Elders?

The Elders had jurisdiction over minor causes, arising under the law of God, with power of scourging, and of excommunication,[1] they presided over the Synagogue services, and themselves taught the people, in that assembly.[2]

[1] Deut. xxii. 18; Mat. x. 17; John ix. 22, 34. [2] Mat. xv. 2; Luke xiii. 14.

§ 119. What was the court of superior jurisdiction?

The Synagogues were subordinate to the Sanhedrim, or great council of Elders, sitting at Jerusalem.

Above, § 82; Deut. xvi. 18; xvii. 8, 9; Num. xi. 16, 17; Acts xxii. 5, 30; xxiii. 1, 2.

§ 120. Was the Synagogue system of divine authority?

Not only did the Synagogue system accord perfectly with the general principles of the law, as addressed to Israel, but it received the highest sanction from the Son of God, by his own constant attendance, and that of his Apostles, upon its services, and participation in them; and by his express assertion of their authority.

Mat. iv. 23; ix. 35; Mark i. 21; Luke iv. 16; Acts ix. 20; xiii. 14, 15; xiv. 1; xvii. 2; xviii. 4; Mat. xxiii. 2–7, compare vii. 29.

14. EXPENSES OF RELIGION.

§ 121. What provision was made for the expenses of the Levitical system?

Two annual tithes of all the increase of the soil, of the flocks, and of the herds;[1] the firstling males of clean animals, the re-

demption money for unclean firstlings and for firstborn sons,[2] and the first fruits of the annual harvests,[3] were statedly appropriated to the service of God, in addition to the several Sacrifices and oblations which were enjoined upon the people, in occasional atonement for sin and purification from uncleanness; and those free will offerings which they were encouraged to make.[4]

[1] Lev. xxvii. 30–32; Num. xviii. 21, 24; Deut. xiv. 22. [2] Ex. xiii. 12; Num. xviii. 15, 16. [3] Ex. xxii. 29; xxxiv. 22; Deut. xxvi. 2–11. [4] Lev. xxvii. 2, 9, 14, 17; Num. xviii. 14; Lev. xxii. 18–29; Deut. xvi. 16.

§ 122. How were these distributed?

These appropriations were distributed to the maintenance of the Priests and Levites, the support of the poor, and the expenses incident to the attendance of the people upon the annual feasts, and the other duties of personal and family religion.

§ 123. What was the provision for the Levites?

A full proportion of the cities and towns of Canaan with their suburbs was assigned to the Levites for dwellings;[1] they received the first tithe of all the increase of the land,

of the flocks and herds as well as of the soil;[2] were entitled to share freely with the people in their annual feasts, at the sanctuary and in their dwellings, and with the poor, in the second tithe of the third year;[3] and were commended to the special benefactions of the people.[4]

[1] Num. xxxv. 2–5; Josh. xxi. 1–42. [2] Lev. xxvii. 30–32; Num. xviii. 21, 24. [3] Deut. xii. 12; xiv. 28, 29; xxvi. 11, 12. [4] Deut. xii. 19; xiv. 27.

§ 124. What was the provision for the Priests?

To the Priests belonged a tenth part of the Levitical tithe.[1] They were entitled to certain parts of all animals offered in sacrifice, except the whole burnt offerings.[2] All the firstlings were theirs, the fat of which however must be burnt upon the altar; and to them belonged the annual first fruits of the land,[3] and all the dedicated things of the children of Israel.[4]

[1] Num. xviii. 25–32. [2] Deut. xviii. 3; Num. xviii. 8–11. [3] Num. xviii. 15–19, 11–13; Deut. xviii. 3–5. [4] Num. v. 8–10.

§ 125. What were the regulations respecting the poor?

The more favoured Israelites were enjoined to lend their needy brethren whatever they required, without interest or reward, and without regard to the approach of the year of release, which, recurring every seven years, cancelled all debts; whilst the fiftieth year, the year of jubilee, restored to every man his landed estate, free of all incumbrance.[1] They were entitled to enter any field or vineyard, and eat, without restriction, of the fruit, provided they carried nothing away.[2] The gleanings belonged to them, whilst the harvesters were required to leave a liberal portion to the gleaners.[3] The second tithe of every third year was theirs, together with the spontaneous fruits of the seventh year, and they were commended to the free and liberal charities of their brethren at all times.[4]

[1] Ex. xxii. 25–27; Lev. xxv. 35–38; Deut. xv. 7–11; Ps. xxxvii. 26. [2] Deut. xxiii. 24, 25; Mat. xii. 1. [3] Lev. xix. 9, 10; xxiii. 22; Ruth ii. 15, 16. [4] Deut. xiv. 28, 29; xxvi. 12–14; Ex. xxiii. 11; Lev. xxv. 35; Deut. xv. 7, 8; Ps. cxii. 9.

§ 126. What other expenses were incident to the system?

Beside the three annual feasts,[1] and the expenses of the various purifications, and the other sacrifices and offerings which were prescribed,[2] the second tithe was appropriated to feasting before God at the sanctuary, except every third year, when it was expended upon the poor at home.[3]

[1] Ex. xxiii. 14, 17. [2] Lev. xii. 6–8; xv. 14, 29; Num. vi. 10–12. [3] Deut. xiv. 22–29.

15. THE CHURCH AT CHRIST'S COMING.

§ 127. Was the divine model of the Church fully realized under the Old Testament?

The divine constitution of the Church was greatly corrupted by Israel.

§ 128. What direction did the earlier corruptions assume?

The earlier corruptions arose from disregard of those provisions which were designed to separate the Church of Israel from the defilement and idolatries of other nations; and resulted in frequent idolatrous apostasies.

Jud. ii. 12; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14.

§ 129. What was the later tendency?

The captivities cured Israel of their fondness for other nations, and induced the op-

posite extreme, in a disposition to exaggerate the privileges of Abraham's offspring, and disparage all others, and to draw the line of demarcation between Jew and Gentile so broadly as to exclude the latter from any title to the blessings of the covenant and the favour of God.

Acts x. 28; xi. 3, 18; xxii. 21, 22.

§ 130. What was the condition of the Jewish Church at the coming of Christ?

At the time of Christ's coming the Jewish Church had become greatly corrupted both in doctrine and practice.

§ 131. How was the doctrine of the Church corrupted?

Instead of faithful exposition of the law of God, the Elders had overlaid and superceded it with their traditions; in which the ordinances of divine service were encumbered with burdensome additions,—the moral precepts explained away,—the doctrine of the Abrahamic covenant perverted,—the character of the coming Seed altogether misapprehended,—the interest of the Gentile world in him ignored,—and the significance of the types and ceremonies of the Levitical system, as pointing to him, overlooked.

Mat. xv. 2–6; John viii. 19, 39; i. 26; Mat. xxiii. 23; xxii. 42–46; 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

§ 132. How was the constitution and order of the Church corrupted?

Lineal descent from Abraham and scrupulous observance of the traditions of the Elders, were regarded as constituting the highest title to the privileges and promises of Israel, instead of true faith and obedience to God; while the truth was hidden from the Gentiles, by the corruptions of the Elders, the law of God rendered odious by the added ceremonies, and by the pride and hostility of the Jews, and the door of entrance encumbered by a multitude of initiatory rites; so that, practically, the Gentiles were deprived of their rightful privileges in the Church of God.

Luke iii. 8; John viii. 33, 39; iv. 9; Acts x. 28; xxi. 28, 29.

16. THE NEW DISPENSATION.

§ 133. Was the Old Testament Church dissolved by Christ?

Neither Christ nor his Apostles intimate a design to dissolve the existing Church, or to erect a new one; nor have we any account

of such a transaction; but the lineal identity of the Christian Church with that of Israel is constantly testified and illustrated.

Rom. ix. 6; xi. 19; iv. 11–17.

§ 134. Was there any change in the essential nature of the society?

The Church still remains what from the beginning it was ordained to be,—an organized instrument of testimony to the truth of God.

Isa. lx. 1–3; Mat. v. 14; Eph. iii. 8–10; 1 Tim. iii. 15.

§ 135. Was there any change as to the matter of the testimony?

The Church is now commissioned to testify of the promised Seed as already come, and of his work as accomplished. But the promises made to Abraham, and witnessed by the ancient Church, included all the blessings of the New Testament; and the word of Christ and his Apostles is nothing more than an exposition of that same gospel which God preached before to Abraham.

Heb. vi. 12–20; Acts iii. 25, 26; xiii. 23, 32, 33; Gal. iii. 8.

§ 136. Are the essential principles of the organization changed?

The fundamental organic principles, of the unity of the Church,—its subdivision into local communities and Congregations,—and its government by Elders, of defined qualifications, chosen by the people, and sitting in a gradation of councils, particular and general; as well as the terms of membership,—continue, unchanged, as under the former dispensation.

1 Cor. xii. 20–28; Gal. iii. 28; Eph. iv. 4, 15, 16. Below, § 231.

§ 137. How was the nation of Israel related to the gospel Church?

Christ himself was an Israelite and a minister of the circumcision; his Apostles and first Evangelists were Jews, who retained full connexion with the Church of Israel; their preaching began at Jerusalem, and, elsewhere, in the Synagogues; and believing Israel were the first to be invested with the privileges peculiar to the gospel dispensation, and constituted the materials of its first Congregations; whilst the rest apostatized through unbelief, and were cut off, and believers of the Gentiles were gathered in, and made heirs to the forfeited blessings.

Rom. xv. 8; Mat. x. 5, 6; Luke xxiv. 47;

Acts xiii. 46; xxii. 18–21; Rom. xi. 1–26; Eph. ii. 11–22.

§ 138. Wherein did Christ modify the constitution of the Church?

The principal changes introduced by Christ, in the constitution of the Church, had respect to the mode and extent of her testimony.

§ 139. How was the testimony of the ancient Church maintained?

The testimony borne by the Old Testament Church was mainly passive, consisting in the keeping of the oracles of God, the erection of the tabernacle of witness and temple, and the observance of those Levitical institutions which, as dark symbols, foreshadowed the gospel; so that, to the nations, her's was but a beacon light dimly shining in the distance.

Ex. xxv. 21; Num. xvii. 7; xviii. 2; Acts vii. 44.

§ 140. What is the commission of the New Testament Church?

It is the commission of the New Testament Church to go into all the world, and publish the gospel, as now revealed in Christ, to every creature under heaven.

Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 23.

17. THE TRANSITION.

§ 141. In what manner was the new dispensation introduced?

Christ appointed Baptism at the beginning of his ministry, and the Supper at its close; whilst the old dispensation continued in full authority. He then offered his one sacrifice, and, having commanded that the gospel be preached to all nations, entered, with his own blood, into the heavens, and appeared in the presence of God for us; thus consummating the work of atonement. Thence, on the day of Pentecost, he poured out his Spirit, endowing the Apostles for their ministry, and sealing their first testimony by the conversion of three thousand souls,—the first fruits of the gospel.

John iii. 22, 26; iv. 1, 2; Luke xxii. 19, 20; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts i. 8, 9; Heb. viii. 1–4; ix. 12, 23, 24; Acts ii. 4, 41.

§ 142. What relation did the Christian Church at first bear to the ceremonial law?

After the day of Pentecost, and beginning

of the gospel, the Apostles and Jewish believers still continued, as before, to observe the strictest conformity to the ceremonial system.

Acts x. 14, 28; xi. 1–3; xxiv. 17, 18.

§ 143. What instructions were subsequently received on the subject?

The Church was taught that observances which were of merely traditional authority must not be made obstacles to the evangelization of the Gentiles; and that even the positive precepts of the ceremonial law, as found in the books of Moses, were inoperative with respect to the Gentile converts to the gospel.

Acts x. 15, 28; xi. 17, 18; xv. 19–21, 23–29; Gal. ii. 3, 4, 11–13.

§ 144. In what manner was the ceremonial law at length set aside?

For the first forty years of her history, the New Testament Church embraced in her bosom two classes, — the circumcised, and the uncircumcised; the former punctually fulfilling the requirements of the law of Moses, and the latter independent of it; until, at length, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and dispersion of the nation rendered its ob-

servance impossible to Israel itself, and released the Church from the Levitical rule.

Compare Acts xvi. 3 with Gal. ii. 3; Acts xviii. 18, 21; xx. 16; xxi. 20–26; xxiv. 18; xxv. 8; xxviii. 17.

§ 145. What was the effect of this order of transition?

The Gentiles were thus at once endowed with all the liberties and blessings of the gospel, whilst the continued conformity of Jewish Christians to the law of Moses was a pledge that theirs was not a new religion,—that the principles of the gospel were not incongruous with those of the Old Testament, nor its institutions erected on the ruins of the ancient church,—but that the gospel church was the same, relieved of encumbrances and endowed with that inheritance of all nations which was promised in the Abrahamic covenant.

§ 146. Was this continued observance of the law contrary to the teachings of the gospel and mind of Christ?

If in matters so important the Apostles may be charged with ignorance or unfaithfulness, the very foundations of the Christian church and of the gospel itself are removed,

as it would then be impossible to know wherein to rely upon their instructions.

§ 147. Does the vision of Peter show the Apostles to have been still in ignorance?

The vision of Peter shows the promise that the Apostles should be led by the Comforter into all truth to have been fulfilled; as the requisite instruction was given when needed.

John xiv. 26; Acts x. 14–16, 28; xi. 2, 3, 18.

§ 148. Did that vision purport to prohibit the observance of the law of Moses?

Peter's vision had reference to traditions of the Elders, restricting intercourse with Gentiles, of which the law of Moses and the Old Testament Scriptures contain no trace.

Acts x. 28,—"unlawful,"—In the original, "uncustomary," contrary to common law.

§ 149. Does Paul condemn the observance of the law of Moses?

The decree of the council at Jerusalem, in which Paul heartily concurred,[1]—his own observance of the law of Moses,[2]—his discrimination between Timothy and Titus,[3]—and the whole tenor of his writings, show that his warnings were aimed,—not against the free and believing observance of that law by

Jewish Christians,—but against a spirit of bondage thereto, a ceremonial reliance on it for salvation, and consequent imposition of it upon Gentile converts.[4]

[1] Acts xv.; xvi. 4. [2] Proofs of § 144. [3] Acts xvi. 3; Gal. ii. 3–5. [4] Gal. ii. 15–21; iii. 10–14; v. 1–6; 1 Cor. vii. 18, 19.

§ 150. Why were the temple services at length brought to an end?

The worship of the temple was essentially national in its character, inaccessible to distant nations, and therefore unadapted to a world religion; and the officers and ceremonies of that system were dark shadows of things now fully known, and seals of promises which are now fulfilled. They were therefore brought to a close, as unsuited to the clearness of the gospel day, and the title of all nations to its blessings.

John iv. 20–24; 2 Cor. iii. 13, 14; Eph. iii. 14–19.

§ 151. Why was not Circumcision observed in the Gentile Churches?

Circumcision was not only a symbol and seal of the promise which is fulfilled in the Sacrifice of Christ, but it was a pledge to the children of Abraham that the Messiah

should be of their nation; and, therefore, inappropriate to the Gentiles, who now receive the gospel.

Gen. xvii. 19, 21; xxii. 17, 18.

18. EXTRAORDINARY OFFICERS.

§ 152. What officers did Christ set in the New Testament Church?

Christ gave the New Testament Church Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Bishops — or Teaching and Ruling Elders, and Deacons. Of these, the Apostles and Prophets were extraordinary and temporary officers.

[1] Eph. iv. 11; 1 Tim. v. 17; Phil. i. 1; Tit. i. 5.

§ 153. How does it appear that the Apostles were extraordinary officers?

That the Apostles were extraordinary officers, appears, alike, from the duties assigned them and the qualifications and gifts necessary to the office.

§ 154. What were the duties of the apostolic office?

It was the office of the Apostles to testify to the Messiahship of Jesus, demonstrated by the facts of his life, death, resurrection

and ascension to heaven, as witnessed by them;[1] to separate believing from apostate Israel, and to preside over the Church in entering on the performance of its new commission to the world.[2]

[1] Mark iii. 14, 15; Luke xxiv. 48; Acts i. 21, 22; v. 32; x. 39–41. [2] Acts ii. 41, 42; v. 12–14; xix. 9.

§ 155. What qualifications and gifts were requisite to the office?

If not personally conversant with the whole life of Christ, the Apostles must, at least, have seen him alive after the crucifixion, and thus be able to testify, from personal knowledge, to the fact of his resurrection and ascension;[1] they were appointed immediately by Christ to bear that testimony,[2] and their teaching was dictated by him, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and confirmed by miraculous signs.[3]

[1] Acts i. 21; 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8, 9; 2 Cor. xii. 1–5. [2] Luke vi. 13; Mark iii. 14; Acts i. 24; Gal. i. 1, 16. [3] John xiv. 26; xv. 26, 27; xvi. 13, 14; 1 Cor. xi. 23; Gal. i. 12, 16; ii. 2, 6; Eph. iii. 3; 1 John i. 3; Acts i. 8; 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12; Heb. ii. 3, 4.

§ 156. Have the Apostles any successors?

The Apostles were Elders, or, teachers and governors; and, in this respect, the ordinary ministry of the Church are their successors.[1] But, in the peculiar functions of the apostolate, the twelve could, in the nature of the case, have no successors. The Church is founded upon the testimony of "the twelve Apostles of the Lamb;" and in its twelve foundations their names are written.[2]

[1] 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, compare John xxi. 15–17; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Phil. iv. 3; Acts xv. 6.
[2] Eph. ii. 20; Rev. xxi. 14.

§ 157. What were the Prophets of the New Testament Church?

The New Testament Prophets were inspired teachers, who were occasionally sent for the guidance and instruction of the church in the forming period of its evangelic history.

Acts xiii. 1, 2; xv. 32; xxi. 9–11; 1 Cor. xiv. 1–32.

19. EVANGELISTS AND ELDERS.

§ 158. What is the office of the Evangelist?

Evangelists are itinerant Elders, whose office it is to carry the gospel to the unevangelized, and to organize those who receive it

into congregations, ordain Elders over them, and set in order the ordinances of the New Testament.

Acts xxi. 8; viii. 4–12, 26–40; 2 Tim. iv. 5.

§ 159. Does the office of Evangelist still exist?

Missionaries to the destitute and the heathen are Evangelists, and the office must continue to exist, so long as there are any of the human race unevangelized and the Church remains true to her trust.

Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

§ 160. Is this title otherwise applied?

The word evangelist means a publisher of the evangel, or gospel; and is popularly used to designate the authors of the first four books of the New Testament. It is not, however, so used in the Scriptures.

§ 161. Do the Scriptures recognize the office of diocesan Bishop?

The only stated officers of which the Scriptures speak, as interposed between the Apostles and Deacons, are the Presbyter-bishops or Elders; to whom they attribute, without reserve, all the prerogatives of government, instruction, and discipline over the flock. So that, not only do they ignore, but utterly ex-

clude diocesan Bishops from the scriptural system.

Acts xx. 17, 28; 1 Tim. iii. 2, 5; 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

§ 162. By what titles are the ordinary rulers and teachers of the churches designated?

As superintendents of the Churches they are called Bishops, that is, overseers; as rulers, they are called Elders; as it is their duty to feed, or guide and instruct, the flock, they are called Pastors or Shepherds; and as they are servants of Christ, they are called Ministers.

Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5–7; Eph. iv. 11; Col. i. 7.

§ 163. How does it appear that Bishops and Elders are the same?

That Bishops and Elders are the same, appears from the use of both titles interchangably with reference to the same persons; from the repeated enumerations in which sometimes one name and sometimes the other is applied to a grade of officers interposed between the Apostles and Deacons, whilst both never occur in the same enumeration; and from the fact that, in prescribing the qualifi-

cations of the ordinary officers of the churches, Paul recognizes but two classes,—the Deacons, and those whom he interchangably calls Elders and Bishops.

Acts xx. 17, 28,—"overseers,"—In the original, "bishops;" Tit. i. 5, 7; 1 Tim. iii. 2, 8; Phil. i. 1; 1 Pet. v. 1, 2,—"taking the oversight,"—In the original, "the bishopric."

§ 164. Does the New Testament mention the creation of this office?

The Eldership had existed in the Church from the time of the Egyptian bondage. Its functions had been ascertained and their exercise regulated at Sinai. Those functions were identified with the stated services of the Synagogues, and were, therefore, well known and familiar in the time of Christ, and they underwent no essential change in passing over to the new dispensation; so that no specific introduction or description was requisite.[1] Hence no account of the origin of the office is to be found in the New Testament; the first allusions to it being incidental, and implying it to be familiar to the reader, and of recognized propriety to the ecclesiastical system.[2]

[1] Above §§ 47, 75–78, 117, 118; Matt. xv.

2; xxvi. 47, 57; Acts iv. 5; vi. 12; xxv. 15. [2] Acts xi. 30; xiv. 23; xv. 4.

§ 165. What are the qualifications prescribed for the Eldership?

It is required of an Elder that his life be pure and blameless, that he be characterized by moderation and self-control, of a generous and hospitable spirit, of good report by the world, mature in piety, ruling well his own house, sound in the faith, and apt to teach.

1 Tim. iii. 1–7; Tit. i. 5–11.

§ 166. How many classes of Elders are there?

There are two classes of Elders mentioned, namely, those who rule, and those who also labor in the Word and doctrine,—otherwise called, Ruling Elders and Teaching Elders.

1 Tim. v. 17.

§ 167. Is there authority for a plurality of Elders in the Congregation?

From the example of the Synagogues, out of which the Christian Eldership was derived, and from express and repeated statements made in the New Testament, it is certain that the Congregations organized by the Apostles were severally endowed with a plurality of Elders.

See §§ 113–118, 189–194; Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17; Tit. i. 5; James v. 14.

§ 168. What is the warrant for the ruling, as distinct from the teaching Eldership?

Their warrant is found in the fact that "governments" were among the gifts distinctively made to the Church, and that there were Elders who did not labor in the Word and doctrine, and yet were by Paul declared worthy of double honor, and could not therefore have been chargeable with official delinquency.

1 Cor. xii. 28; 1 Tim. v. 17.

§ 169. How does this accord with the requirement that the Elders, as a class, be "apt to teach"?

The highest gifts are to be sought for the office, and it is the duty of all the Elders, according to their ability, to instruct the flock; whilst it especially devolves on those who are called to give themselves wholly to labor in the Word and doctrine.

1 Tim. iii. 2; iv. 14–16.

§ 170. What are the duties of the Teaching Elders?

It is the office of the Teaching Elders, to preach the Word, in public and from house

to house; to administer the Sacraments; and to bless the people; and to join with the Ruling Elders in the pastoral and judicial oversight and government of the flock.[1] Their office they are to fulfil with all authority and faithfulness, as thereto called and commissioned by Christ, and assured of his presence and sanction to their ministry, making it a savor of eternal life to those who receive, and of eternal death to those who reject it.[2]

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 2; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Acts xx. 20, 21; Below, §§ 195, 219 et seq. [2] Tit. ii. 15; Luke x. 16; 2 Cor. ii. 14–17.

§ 171. What are the prerogatives of the Elders?

The Elders are entitled to the high esteem of the people, to their obedience in the Lord, and to support and honor in the faithful performance of their duties; and those who devote themselves to labor in the Word not only have a right to special honor in these respects, but to all needful pecuniary support, so that they may be unembarrassed in giving themselves wholly to the work of the ministry.

1 Thes. v. 12, 13; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18; 1 Cor. ix. 7–14; Gal. vi. 6.

20. THE DIACONATE.

§ 172. How does the New Testament dispensation differ from the Old as to the maintenance of the ordinances and ministry?

Under the Old Dispensation abundant provision was made by law, for the support of the sanctuary and the officers of religion.[1] Under the New, the principle is laid down, in emphatic terms, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.[2] But the mode and measure of their support is left to be determined by the free and spontaneous operation of Christian principles in the hearts of God's people.[3]

[1] Above, §§ 121–126. [2] Luke x. 4–7; 1 Tim. v. 17, 18. [3] Gal. vi. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 11–14; and compare, 1 Tim. iii. 3, and 1 Pet. v. 2.

§ 173. What is the design of this change?

Certainly this freedom of the gospel Church was not designed to enable the people of God the more freely to accumulate and hoard the unrighteous mammon; nor to justify a diminished provision for the gospel ministry, whose wants are as great, and whose services are not less valuable to the Church of God

than those of the tribe of Levi.[1] Its design was to give freer scope to the promptings of gratitude and love to Christ and his servants; to constitute the freewill offerings of the people a bond of peculiar tenderness and affection between them and their pastors; and to leave the resources of the Church unembarrassed, to flow in such directions as the wide extent and various exigencies of the great field may indicate.[2]

[1] 1 John iii. 17; Compare Luke x. 4–7, and 1 Cor. ix. 14, with James v. 1–4. [2] Mat. xxv. 35, 40; Gal. vi. 6; Rom. x. 14, 15; Phil. iv. 15–18; Acts xi. 28–30.

§ 174. What occasioned the first appointment of Deacons?

Not only were the Apostles, like their Master, numbered among the poor, but many of the first converts of the gospel belonged to that class;[1] and the expense of their support, as well as of the weekly administration of the Lord's Supper, was met by contributions of proportionate liberality; the management of which threatening to draw too heavily upon the time of the Apostles, they created the office of the Deacon to take charge of it.[2]

[1] Acts iii. 6; Mat. xi. 5; Luke iv. 18;

James ii. 5. [2] Acts ii. 44–46; iv. 34–37; v. 1, 2; vi. 1–6,—"Daily ministration,"—In the original, "daily deaconage."

§ 175. What are the subjects of their charge?

To their charge are committed the table of the Lord, or the expenses of public worship and of the Sacraments; the table of the ministry, or the support of the preachers of the gospel, whether at home or abroad; and the table of the poor, or all expenses incident to the exercise of the charity of the Church toward the needy.

See Proofs of § 174,[2].

§ 176. Are the Deacons independent of the Eldership in the exercise of their office?

The office of the Deacons is administrative only; and subject, as are all other functions in the Church, to the general supervision of the Elders, the only rulers therein.

Acts xi. 29, 30.

§ 177. What are the qualifications prescribed for the office?

The qualifications prescribed for the Deacons are similar to those of the Elders, excepting aptness to teach.

Acts vi. 3; 1 Tim. iii. 2–13.

§ 178. Is preaching a function of the diaconate?

All Christians are required to be ready to give on every proper occasion a reason of the hope that is in them; of which Stephen was an example; and Philip the Deacon afterward became an Evangelist.[1] But the very design of appointing the Deacons was to prevent the pecuniary affairs of the Church from occupying the time of those who were called to preach the Word. They could not therefore have been designed as preachers, —a conclusion which is confirmed by the fact that aptness to teach is not prescribed as a qualification for the office.[2]

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 15; Acts vi. 9, 10; xxi. 8.
[2] Acts vi. 2; 1 Tim. iii. 8–13,—Compare verse 2.

21. THE CHILDREN.

§ 179. Were the conditions of Church membership changed by Christ?

As Christ did not change the nature of the Church, so neither did he modify the terms of membership; but the Church still consists,

as at first, of professed believers and their households.

Mark xvi. 16; John xiv. 23, 24; Acts ii. 39; viii. 13, 23; xvi. 15, 33; 1 Cor. i. 16.

§ 180. Do the terms of the gospel call exclude children from the privileges of the covenant?

The promise that he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, no more excludes infants from Baptism than from salvation. The terms of the covenant are the same as of old, when the children were unquestionably admitted;—and there is no trace of any new law or example excluding them from the privileges which, before Christ, they had shared with their parents for two thousand years.

Mark xvi. 16; Rom. iii. 29–31.

§ 181. What light does the use of Circumcision among the early Jewish Christians shed on this subject?

The administration of Circumcision in the early Christian Church, was a distinct and solemn recognition of the right of the children to whom it was administered, to the benefits of the covenant. A refusal of Baptism to children would therefore have involved the conclusion that the children of believing

Gentiles had no title in the covenant, whilst those of Jews had; and that the latter, although recognized sharers in its privileges, might have them confirmed only with the Old Testament seal.

Gen. xvii. 10, 14; Above §§ 34, 35.

§ 182. Would not such a state of things have caused agitation in the Church?

Such a discrimination between Jew and Gentile, and denial of the covenant rights of children must have aroused an excitement and induced a challenge for express divine warrant, of an earnestness far exceeding that which the question of Gentile circumcision created.[1] Yet of no such agitation, is there a hint in the Scriptures.

[1] Acts xi. 3; xv. 1, 2, 7, 31.

§ 183. What are the indications of the New Testament with reference to children?

Christ, with displeasure at the attempt, forbids the exclusion of children from him; and that, expressly on the ground, that they are eminently fit subjects for his kingdom; and commits them, as his lambs, to the care of the ministry;—and the Apostle declares them to be clean,—that is, endowed by God with the privileges of church members.

Mat. xix. 14; Mark x. 14; John xxi. 15; 1 Cor. vii. 14; Acts x. 15; Above, §§ 93, 94.

§ 184. Can the word, clean, have no other meaning?

The Scriptures speak of only two classes of clean persons,—those who are renewed by the Holy Spirit,—and those who are entitled by divine appointment, to claim the privileges of actual fellowship in the visible Church. Either interpretation would leave the right of children of believers, to a place in the Church, unquestionable; but that given above is alone admissible.

Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27; Num. ix. 13; xix. 12, 13; Lev. vii. 20; xxii. 3.

§ 185. What other indications are there of the position of children in the Church?

The epistles, which are addressed to the Churches of the saints, recognize the children as embraced with their parents therein; and address them, in their turn, in terms appropriate to that assumption.

1 John ii. 12–14; Compare Eph. vi. 1, with i. 1; and Col. iii. 20, with i. 2.

§ 186. What are the privileges of infant members of the Church?

It is the privilege of infant members to

enjoy the tender and affectionate oversight and care of the Church and the Eldership, as well as of their parents,—to receive from them protection, instruction, and counsel, admonition and rebuke,—and by every means, of training and discipline, to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; so that they may be qualified, at a proper age, to enter upon the enjoyment of all the privileges of adult citizens of the commonwealth of Israel.

John xxi. 15; Acts xx. 28; 1 John ii. 12, 13; Eph. vi. 4; Deut. vi. 7.

§ 187. What is the position of unbaptized children of professing parents?

Neither under the old dispensation nor the new do the seals pertain to the essence of the covenant. Else none of the unbaptized could be saved. They are only pledges which appeal to faith, the only condition of the promises.[1] Such children are, therefore, none the less, by birthright, heirs; and the extent to which the absence of the seal vitiates their title in the promises, depends altogether upon the cause of the omission. If from any cause implying lack of parental faith, the promises are void, through failure of the condition.[2]

But if it be by reason of ignorance of the privilege, or preventing providences, the grace of God, which is pledged to parental faith and fidelity in the dedication and training of the children, remains sure; nor does the ignorance or unbelief of one parent forfeit the blessing.[3]

[1] Mark xvi. 16; Deut. x. 16; Jer. iv. 4; John iii. 36; Rom. ii. 28; iii. 28; iv. 11.
[2] Lev. xxvi. 14–16, 40, 41; Rom. iv. 12–16.
[3] Gen. xviii. 17–19; 1 Cor. vii. 14.

§ 188. What is the authority and office of the Sabbath School?

The Sabbath School, conducted under the supervision and control of the teaching and ruling Eldership of the Church, possesses the authority which Christ has given that Eldership, to whom he has entrusted the instruction and government of the lambs as well as the sheep of the fold.[1] Its office is to instruct the youth in the whole truth of God, alike touching the scheme of doctrines and the system of order contained in the Scriptures; there being no scriptural warrant for keeping back any part of the counsel of God from any disciple in the school of Christ.[2] Where the officers of the Sabbath School assume an independence of the Eldership, they

are not only without authority, but are guilty of usurpation and schism.[3]

[1] John xxi. 15; Acts xx. 28. [2] Deut. vi. 7; Acts xx. 26, 27. [3] Heb. xiii. 17.

22. THE CONGREGATION.

§ 189. How were the first Christian Congregations constituted?

The Apostles preached the gospel first to the Jews at the temple and in the Synagogues, and organized the believers into Congregations like those of the Synagogues; and, if, as at Berea, the majority of the Synagogue believed, it seems to have been continued, with no other modification than such as resulted from the withdrawal of the unbelieving.

Acts xvii. 10–14.

§ 190. What evidence of this occurs in the ministry of Paul?

Paul habitually attended at the Synagogues, and took part in the service as a fellow worshipper, under the direction of the Elders; and continued, with the converts of his ministry, thus to assemble, unless excluded by the hostility of unbelievers; when he

removed thence, and organized separate Congregations with similar officers and a like order of service.

Acts ix. 20; xiii. 5, 14, 15, 42–48; xiv. 1, 23; xvii. 1–4, 10–12; xviii. 4–11; xxiv. 12; xviii. 26.

§ 191. How does it appear that the Christian Congregations were like the Synagogues?

That the Christian assemblies were similar to those of the Synagogues, is evinced, by the designations which are in common applied to them and their officers,—by the similarity of government, worship and discipline, intimated in occasional hints,—and by the silence of the New Testament, as to the introduction of any new system or principles of order or government, by the Apostles, or deviation from those already existing, with which they were every way, so intimately associated.

§ 192. Wherein were the designations the same?

The name, Ecclesia, or Church, which is the New Testament designation of the Christian assemblies, is the same in the original as the "congregation" of the Old Testa-

ment, which was the common Jewish designation for the Synagogue assembly, and was so used by Christ himself, before the new dispensation had come in, or a Christian Congregation been organized.[1] The word, synagogue, which was occasionally used to designate the assembly, but more frequently applied to the house of worship, is applied to Christian places of worship;[2] and the ruling officers of the Churches were called Elders, —from old time, the title of the rulers of the Synagogues.[3]

[1] Mat. xviii. 17,—compare Ps. xxvi. 12, and lxviii. 26; Acts vii. 38; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Acts ix. 31; Rom. xvi. 4. [2] Ja. ii. 2,—margin and Greek, "If there come into your synagogue." [3] Acts xiv. 23; xx. 17; Tit. i. 5.

§ 193. What indications are there of similarity of organization and worship?

As in the Synagogues so in the Churches, the Elders were the ordinary teachers and rulers of the Congregation;[1] by whose permission other fit persons might take part in leading the worship, which consisted in preaching, prayer, singing praises, reading the Scriptures, and administration of the Sacraments.[2]

[1] Acts xx. 17, 28, 30; Tit. i. 5, 9–11; 1 Pet. v. 1–4; 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. [2] 1 Cor. xiv. 26–33, 39, 40; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Col. iv. 16; 2 Pet. i. 19–21; 1 Cor. xi. 20. Compare § 116.

§ 194. What then is the form of a regularly organized Christian Congregation?

A regularly organized Christian Congregation consists of a company of professed believers, with their households, associated together in one place for divine worship and godly living according to the Scriptures, under the oversight and instruction of a bench of Elders, of whom one or more are teachers, and served in the pecuniary and temporal affairs of the Church by a board of Deacons.

Phil. i. 1.

§ 195. How are the functions of the Eldership divided?

To the Elders of the New Testament Church belong two classes of functions,—those of the Power of Order, embracing all which may be exercised by individuals; and those of the Power of Jurisdiction.

§ 196. By whom is the Power of Order to be exercised?

The functions pertaining to the Power of Order, are Preaching, Administering the Sacraments, and Blessing the people,—all which being functions of instruction, belong properly to the Teaching Elders.

Mat. xxviii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 26.

§ 197. What is the Power of Jurisdiction?

The Power of Jurisdiction is that authority which belongs to assemblies of Elders, or church courts; and is comprehended under the three general heads of Ordination, Legislation, and Discipline.

23. THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS.

§ 198. What is preaching?

Preaching is the utterance of a public and official testimony, in the name of Christ, to the truth of God, as contained in his Word and summed in the gospel; accompanied with the presence of the Son of God, sealing it unto eternal life to those that believe, and making it a savor of eternal death, to those who reject it.

Mark xvi. 15, 16; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Luke x. 16; Acts xx. 21, 26, 27; 2 Cor. ii. 14–17.

§ 199. What relation do the Sacraments bear to the preaching of the Word?

The Sacraments are seals appointed by Christ, by which he attests and confirms the preached gospel, the truths of which are symbolized in them.

Mat. xxviii. 19; xxvi. 26–28; Acts ii. 38; xxii. 16; 1 Cor. x. 16.

§ 200. Wherein do the New Testament Sacraments differ from those of the Old?

Of all the Old Testament Sacraments, the shedding of blood was an essential part; being designed the more intelligibly to set forth the offering of Christ, the promise of which they attested and sealed. But, that offering having now been made once for all,—the blood of the cross is the sacrificial element of the New Testament Sacraments; which are therefore without other blood.

1 Cor. v. 7; Heb. ix. 23–28; x. 12–14.

§ 201. What relation do they sustain to each other?

Circumcision and Sacrifice were Sacraments of unmingled blood, and seals to the promise of Christ's coming and sacrificial work, and are therefore finished in him.[1] But the Baptism of purification, and the Passover,

embraced mainly, in their design, the benefits to believers following upon the sacrifice of Christ. They are, therefore, divested of the bloody rites connected therewith, and perpetuated, in Baptism and the Lord's Supper.[2]

[1] Above, §§ 21, 35; Heb. viii. 7, 8, 13. [2] §§ 49, 109; Luke xxii. 15–20; 1 Cor. v. 7.

§ 202. What was the Baptism of John?

John was sent to call Israel to purify themselves from their sins, and prepare for the coming of the Lord;[1] he was a Priest of the family of Aaron and a minister of the Levitical system,[2] of which the Baptism of purification for sin was one of the most remarkable ordinances.[3] With it, in the absence of any other description, or the announcement of a new ordinance, the "Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," would seem to be clearly identified; in the administration of which John fulfilled a function proper alike to his priestly office, and to his commission as herald of the new covenant.[4]

[1] Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5, 6; Luke i. 17, 76, 77; Mat. iii. 3, 8–10; Isa. xl. 3–5. [2] Luke i. 5, 13. [3] Above, §§ 104–110. [4] Below, § 206.

§ 203. Is there scriptural evidence of Baptism by immersion?

Neither in the Old Testament nor the New is there a single unequivocal allusion to immersion, as a symbol of the gift of the Holy Spirit for the purging of sin, or for any typical purpose whatever.

§ 204. What is Christian Baptism?

Christian Baptism is a Sacrament wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Mat. xxviii. 19; Gal. iii. 27, 29.

§ 205. How does Baptism signify our ingrafting into Christ?

The pouring or sprinkling of water upon the person is the scriptural and divinely appointed symbol of the renewing gift of the Holy Spirit;[1] who, dwelling in Christ,[2] and poured out by him upon his people,[3] ingrafts or unites them to him, as branches to the vine, or members to the head;[4] and, so abiding in them, bestows life to the soul; works in them cleansing and sanctifying grace; and will quicken their bodies in the resurrection.[5]

[1] Isa. xliv. 3; xxxii. 15; Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27; Prov. i. 23; Joel ii. 28; Zech. xii. 10; Acts i. 4, 5; ii. 4, 17, 18. [2] Luke iv. 1, 18–21; John i. 33; iii. 34. [3] Luke iii. 16; John i. 33; xv. 26; xvi. 7. [4] 1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. vi. 3–5; viii. 9, 10; John xv. 1–7; Eph. iv. 15, 16; v. 30; Col. ii. 19. [5] 1 John v. 12; Ps. li. 7–12; Lev. xiv. 7, 51; Num. viii. 7; Rom. viii. 11.

§ 206. Who are to be baptized?

As under the Old Dispensation, so now, Baptism is the seal of investiture with covenant privileges;[1] and is therefore to be administered to all who are embraced in the provisions of the covenant, and admitted to discipleship; whether adults or infants.[2]

[1] Above, § 108; Acts ii. 38, 39. [2] Mat. xxviii. 19, margin, and original,—"Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," &c.; John xxi. 15–17; 1 John ii. 12, 13; 2 Tim. iii. 15; above, §§ 179–186.

§ 207. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is a Sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth, and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner,

but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Mat. xxvi. 26, 27; 1 Cor. xi. 23–27; John vi. 48–58, 63; 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

24. OTHER PUBLIC ORDINANCES.

§ 208. What is the Benediction?

The Benediction is an official blessing of the people of Christ, in his name, according to his will, and by his authority, by ministers of his appointment.

Lev. ix. 22, 23; Num. vi. 23–27; Rom. xv. 33; xvi. 24; 1 Cor. xvi. 23; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Gal. vi. 18; Eph. vi. 23, 24; Phil. iv. 23; Col. iv. 18; 1 Thes. v. 28; 2 Thes. iii. 18.

§ 209. What are the other Ordinances of public worship?

The other Ordinances of public worship are prayer,[1] singing praises,[2] fasting,[3] thanksgiving,[4] vowing or covenanting,[5] and free will offerings of charity;[6] in each of which it is the privilege and duty of all to join, under the direction of the Elders.

[1] Acts ii. 42; iv. 24, 31. [2] Eph. v. 19;

Col. iii. 16. [3] Acts xiii. 2; xiv. 23; Mat. ix. 15. [4] Neh. xi. 17; 2 Thes. v. 18; Heb. xiii. 15. [5] Acts xviii. 18; xxi. 23; Neh. ix. 38. [6] Acts iv. 34–37; v. 1–4; 1 Cor. xvi. 2; Phil. iv. 18; Gal. ii. 10.

§ 210. May others than the Elders lead the devotions of the Congregation?

Under the direction and responsibility of the Eldership, any competent persons may both lead in the prayers of the Congregation, exhort the people, and preach the Word.

1 Cor. xiv. 26, 29, 31–33; compare Acts xiii. 15.

§ 211. Do the Scriptures give any forms of words to be used in public worship?

Except so far as relates to Baptism, the Lord's Supper and the Benediction, the Scriptures contain no form of words to be used in the worship of the New Testament Church; the whole ordering thereof, in that respect, being left to the devout intelligence of the Elders and others who are called to conduct the devotions of the assembled Congregation.

1 Cor. xiv. 15–17, 26–40; 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2, 8.

§ 212. Was the Lord's prayer given to the Apostles as a form?

That the Lord's prayer was designed for guidance as to matter, and not as a form, is evident, from the express words of our Saviour,—"After this manner pray ye;"—from the diversity of language in which it is reported by the different evangelists;—from the omission, therein, of the name of Christ, and from the entire silence of the Scriptures as to this form having ever been used on any occasion in the apostolic Church.

Mat. vi. 9–13; Luke xi. 2–4; John xvi. 24.

§ 213. Is it lawful to control the devotions of the Congregation by written forms?

It is not improper to use such forms as may secure an orderly and uniform observance of the sacraments, and the maintenance in all the churches of a common testimony. But the limiting of public worship to forms imposed by ecclesiastical authority is unwarranted in the Scriptures;[1] it infringes the liberty which Christ has given to the devotions of the Churches;[2] and supersedes the agency of the Spirit, who is the promised guide of believers in this duty, and whose presence is especially pledged to the ministry in the fulfilment of their office.[3]

[1] Mat. xv. 9. [2] See proofs of §211. [3] Rom.

viii. 26; Zech. xii. 10; John xvi. 7–11; Mat. xxviii. 20.

§ 214. Is the rite of Confirmation an ordinance of divine authority?

Confirmation, as a prerogative peculiar to Prelates, in which, by the laying on of hands, the Spirit is given, and the grace of baptism confirmed, is irreconcilable with the Scriptures; with respect, alike, to the office of Bishop, which they identify with that of Pastor,[1]—to sanctification, which they never represent as accomplished by the laying on of hands,[2]—and to the nature of the baptismal covenant, which is not established upon promises made by others in the name of the baptized, nor upon a supposed faith of the children; but upon the faith and fidelity of the parents; which cannot be assumed or confirmed by the children.[3] The laying on of the Apostles' hands was for conferring miraculous gifts, in attestation of their gospel;[4] and the confirmation which they dispensed was, to the "souls" of the disciples, and to the "churches" as bodies,—and was given, not by the laying on of hands, but by exhortation and preaching the Word.[5]

[1] Above, § 163. [2] John xvii. 17. [3] 1 Cor.

vii. 14; Gen. xviii. 19. [4] Acts viii. 15–19, Compare x. 44–46; xix. 6; Heb. ii. 4. [5] Acts xiv. 22; xv. 32, 41.

§ 215. What are the holy days of the Christian Church?

The first day of the week, which is the Lord's day, is the only holy day appointed or authorized by the Head of the Church, under the New Dispensation.

§ 216. How does it appear that the Lord's day supersedes the Old Testament Sabbath?

That the Lord's day has superseded the Jewish Sabbath appears from the fact that the observance of the latter is expressly condemned;[1] from the command that Christians forsake not the assembling of themselves together; the designation of the Lord's day as the proper time of assembling and of celebrating the Lord's Supper and other ordinances of religion, and examples of its observance;[2] and from the resurrection and repeated appearances of Christ, the Pentecost, and other remarkable events, which have distinguished that day above all others.[3]

[1] Compare Gal. iv. 9–11, and Col. ii. 16, 17. [2] Heb. x. 25; Acts xx. 7; 1 Cor. xvi. 2. [3] Mat. xxviii. 1–6; John xx. 14–19, 26; Luke

xxiv. 15, 34; Compare, Acts ii. 1–4, and Lev. xxiii. 15, 16. (The word, pentecost, means the fiftieth; it being the fiftieth day from the passover.) Rev. i. 10, 11.

§ 217. May the Church appoint holy days beside the Lord's day?

The observance of days of devotion, fasting and thanksgiving, occasionally appointed, in view of special circumstances of providence, is in entire accord with the teachings of the Bible. But the designation, by the Church, of holy days other than the Lord's day, is not only without warrant in the Scriptures, but the observance of such is severely censured;[1] and, when enforced by appeal to antiquity, is clearly involved in all the rebukes which Christ addressed to the Jews respecting the observance of tradition.[2] Experience has demonstrated a uniform tendency to disesteem the Lord's day, in proportion as respect is rendered to holy days of human authority.

[1] Gal. iv. 9–11; Col. ii. 16, 17. (In the English translation, Easter appears in Acts xii. 4. But, in the original Greek, it is, "the Passover.") [2] Mat. xv. 1–9; Mark vii. 7.

§ 218. Was it not Jewish holy days which were condemned by Paul?

It cannot be pretended that the Apostle makes any exception in favor of Christian holy days. The alternative, therefore, is, that he neither knew of any such, nor contemplated the possibility of their subsequent appointment,—which would imply, that they are altogether foreign to the spirit and practice of the apostolic Church;—or, that, having them in his mind, Paul, by the generality of his language, without exception in favor of Christian days, designedly included them in the censures pronounced.

25. THE CHURCH COURTS.

§ 219. What is the scriptural designation of an assembly of church rulers?

Elders or Presbyters, (from the Greek, *Presbuteros*, an elder,) being the only scriptural rulers in the Church, the courts of the Church are hence called Elderships or Presbyteries.

1 Tim. iv. 14; Luke xxii. 66, "the Elders of the people;"—Original, "the Presbytery of

the people;" Acts xxii. 5, "the estate of the Elders,"—Original, "the Presbytery."

§ 220. How does it appear that the government of the Church is committed to the Elders?

That the government of the Church is entrusted to the Elders appears, from their lineal identity with the Elders of Israel, who were confessedly rulers,[1] from the qualifications required for the office,[2] from the distinct recognition of them as rulers,[3] and from the subjection to them which is required of the Churches.[4]

[1] See above, §§ 164, 165. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5. [3] Acts xv. 6; xvi. 4; xx. 28; 1 Pet. v. 1–4; 1 Tim. v. 17. [4] 1 Thes. v. 12; Heb. xiii. 7, 17.

§ 221. Is not the Church itself spoken of as exercising the powers of Government?

The Church, or, Congregation,—the words being the same, in the original,—is sometimes spoken of as exercising the powers of government.[1] But, that the word in such places signifies the representative Congregation, that is, the Eldership, is proved by the express recognitions of the ruling authority of the Elders; by the use of the word, Con-

gregation, and its equivalents, when it is impossible that the whole body of the people could be meant;[2] and by examples in which it is used avowedly to designate the Elders or rulers of the people.[3]

[1] Mat. xviii. 17; 1 Cor. v. 4. [2] Ex. xix. 7, 8; xxxv. 1, 4, 20,—"All the congregation," if it meant the whole of the twelve tribes, would have numbered more than three millions of souls. [3] Deut. xxxi. 28, 30; Josh. xxiii. 2; xxiv. 1, 2; 1 Chr. xiii. 1–4.

§ 222. Of how many kinds of Presbyteries does the New Testament give indication?

In correspondence with the Old Testament system, there appear to have been at least three grades of Presbyteries in the apostolic Church; namely, the parochial Presbyteries, otherwise called Consistories or church Sessions, each consisting of the Elders of a particular worshipping assembly, statedly meeting together in one place;[1] provincial Presbyteries, composed of the Elders of cities or larger districts, each embracing in its jurisdiction several particular Congregations;[2]—and a general Presbytery or Sanhedrim, issuing decrees and exercising authority over the whole Church.[3]

[1] Acts xiv. 23. [2] Acts xi. 30; xx. 17. [3] Acts xv. 2–6.

§ 223. How does it appear that the Elders at Jerusalem had charge of more Congregations than one?

The Church at Jerusalem consisted of several myriads or ten-thousands of believers, who could not have met in one place;[1] whilst the number of Apostles and other preachers residing there forbids the supposition that they would restrict their labors to a single Congregation.[2]

[1] Acts ii. 41, 47; iv. 4; v. 14; vi. 7; xxi. 20,—"how many thousands,"—Original, "how many myriads,"—that is, ten-thousands. [2] Acts xi. 27; xv. 4, 22, 32, 33.

§ 224. What other instances are there of the same kind?

At Antioch there was a great multitude of believers, preachers of Cyprus and Cyrene, prophets from Jerusalem, Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Manaen, Saul, and many others, prophets and teachers.[1] At Ephesus, while Paul laboured for two years and three months, there were "about twelve" prophets who spake with tongues, besides Timothy and Erastus, and others Paul's per-

sonal assistants;—all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus; and it mightily grew and prevailed.[2] At Corinth, similar evidence of many Congregations[3] is confirmed by the express language of Paul, recognizing several "Churches" frequented by the Corinthian believers.[4]

[1] Acts xi. 21, 24, 26; 20, 27; xiii. 1; xv. 35. [2] Acts xix. 8, 10; 1–7; 22; 18–20. [3] Acts xviii. 8, 10, 11. [4] 1 Cor. xiv. 34.

§ 225. What was the Council of Jerusalem?

The Council of Jerusalem was a general Presbytery, assembled for the purpose of settling, for the whole Church, the authority of the ceremonial law over the Gentile believers. It was composed of such of the Apostles as still remained at Jerusalem,—the Elders of the Church in that city, which was the centre of Jewish Christianity, and a delegation from the Church at Antioch, the mother city of Gentile Christendom.

Acts xv. 2, 12, 23; xxi. 25; xv. 2, 6.

§ 226. Why in this case, was appeal made to Jerusalem?

Appeal was made to Jerusalem,—not so much because of the presence there of two or three Apostles; for, Antioch sent the Apos-

tle Paul, on this very business,—as, because that was the mother Church, where many myriads of the true sons of Abraham, looking for the consolation of Israel, had found it in Christ. That Church, therefore,—mature in a growth dating from Abraham, and familiar with the teachings of the Old Testament Scriptures,—enjoyed a degree of light, knowledge and grace, and consequent competence for judgment, far surpassing that of the Gentiles, who had but recently come to the light.

Acts vi. 7; ix. 31,—compare 1 Cor. v. 1, 2, and xi. 20, 21, with 2 Tim. i. 5; iii. 15.

§ 227. How does it appear that this was a Presbyterial council?

That this was not an Apostolic conference, but a Presbytery, is evident from the very nature of the apostolic office,—from the actual presence and participation of the Elders in its deliberations,—and from the express recognition of their authority in the promulgation of its decrees.

§ 228. How is it proved from the nature of the apostolic office?

The authority of the Apostles was that of the Holy Spirit, dwelling by inspiration in

them. It was therefore complete in each, and adequate in them individually to the decision of any question; as, in the case of Peter with Cornelius. By virtue of apostolic authority, Paul was as competent, alone, at Antioch, to have settled the questions involved, as were all the Apostles, at Jerusalem. Consultation precludes the idea of appeal to that individual inspiration which was the prerogative of the Apostles; and the fact that the question was not determined by the apostolic authority of Paul at Antioch, can only be explained on the ground that the occasion was designed by the Holy Spirit to serve as a precedent for the exercise of authority in the New Testament Church, as in the Old, by Presbyterial councils.

Acts i. 8; Rom. xv. 18, 19; Gal. ii. 1–9.

§ 229. How does it appear from the presence of Elders?

From the nature of the apostolic authority, it was incommunicable. In its exercise, other Presbyters could not participate. So that the admission of others to sit in this Council, proves the Apostles to have sat, in the exercise of their presbyterial authority,[1] and not in apostolic prerogative.

[1] 1 Pet. v. 1; Above, § 156.

§ 230. Were the Elders co-ordinate members of this Council, any more than "the brethren," who are mentioned?

The satisfaction of the membership of the Church of the circumcision with the conclusions had, on questions so interesting to them, was an important fact, and therefore, mentioned by the historian;[1] and in the salutations of the epistle written by the council, the authors of it join with them the brethren, as Paul frequently joins others with him in the salutations of his epistles.[2] But no authority is attributed to them, as it is to the Elders. It was to "the Apostles and Elders," that the question was sent;—it was they that were called together, to consider it;—and the decision was communicated to the Churches of the Gentiles as "the decrees which were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem."[3]

[1] Acts xv. 22. [2] Ib. 23; 1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Gal. i. 2; Phil. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 1 Thes. i. 1; 2 Thes. i. 1. [3] Acts xv. 2, 6; xvi. 4.

§ 231. How, according to these examples, should the Church be organized?

According to the pattern exhibited in the Scriptures, every Congregation should be ruled by a body of Elders, constituting a parochial Presbytery, or church Session; and the whole Church should be governed by a General council of Elders, representing all the particular Churches; and by such other subordinate Presbyteries, superior and inferior, as occasion may require.

26. THE CALL TO OFFICE.

§ 232. What is Ordination?

Ordination is the setting apart of persons who are called by Christ to office or service in his Church.[1] It is rightly performed by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, with fasting and prayer.[2]

[1] Eph. iv. 8, 11; Num. viii. 10, 11; Mark iii. 14; Acts i. 22, 24; xiii. 2, 3; xiv. 23.
[2] 1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts vi. 6; xiv. 23.

§ 233. How are men called to office in the Church?

The call to office in the Church, is usually conveyed by the Spirit of Christ, dwelling in the person, endowing him for the office, and inducing him to seek it; and by the same

Spirit, in the Church, leading it to call him to the service; and, in the Eldership, causing them to recognize his vocation and ordain him to his work.

1 Cor. ix. 17; Gal. i. 15, 16; Acts i. 24–26; vi. 3–6; 1 Tim. iv. 14.

§ 234. Is this process essential to official authority in the Church?

The essential ground of official authority in the Church, is the ordination of Christ;[1] who commonly acts through the regular instrumentality of the Church which he has organized; but is always free to qualify, call and ordain men to his service, by his own immediate prerogative, in whatever way he may see fit.[2]

[1] Gal. i. 1; Acts ix. 15. [2] Mark ix. 38, 39; Gal. i. 12, 16, 17; 1 Cor. xv. 8.

§ 235. How are those to be known who are called of God?

Those who are called of God to the ministry are to be known by the fruits of sound doctrine and holy living, according to the Scriptures; and by the divine authority and efficacy accompanying and sealing their ministry.

Mat. vii. 15–20; Gal. i. 7–9; 2 John

9–11; Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20; 1 Cor. ix. 2; Gal. ii. 8.

§ 236. Is apostolic succession necessary in the ministry?

To suppose it necessary to the ministry to have an ordination lineally derived, by outward succession, from the Apostles, is without Scriptural warrant, and irreconcilable with the terms of the gospel offer, and with the duty of the people to judge the spirits of the prophets and reject the false.

Mark xvi. 16; 1 John iv. 1.

§ 237. How does it conflict with the gospel offer?

It implies that, before men may with safety venture to hear, believe and obey the gospel, they must ascertain whether the preacher has been ordained in a manner, of which the proof is, in the nature of the case, impossible; and if possible, must be utterly incomprehensible to unevangelized hearers; so that it effectually subverts the freeness of the gospel, precludes the certainty of salvation, even to the sincerest believer; and exposes the inquirer to the hazard of perishing without hope, whilst engaged in the futile preliminary investigation.

Phil. i. 18; Rev. xxii. 17; 1 Cor. ix. 2.

§ 238. How does it contravene the duty of judging of Teachers?

It sets aside the scriptural rule, which is, that they shall be known by their fruits; and establishes another, to which the hearers are incompetent to appeal, and which affords no shadow of protection against the teachings of error; thus it exalts the ministry to an unwarrantable independence, and subordinates the consciences of hearers to the authority of men, instead of the Word of God.

Below, § 266; Mat. xv. 9; 2 Pet. i. 19; 3 John 11.

§ 239. Does a rejection of apostolic succession, imply indifference to order?

A rejection of the pretence of apostolical ordination is perfectly consistent with the maintenance of a truly apostolic succession, in the inheritance of the Apostles' doctrine, and the possesion of the same Spirit, attesting the same gospel, and working the fruits of holiness in those who receive it. This succession is the best pledge of respect for the order of Christ's house, and reverence for the authority of those whom he calls to minister therein.

2 John 9–11; 2 Tim. iii. 14–17.

§ 240. What then is the value of Ordination?

The importance of Ordination consists, not in its conveying lineally any imagined apostolic grace; but in its being the divinely appointed mode whereby the Church is instructed, in dependence upon the aid of the Spirit of Christ, to ascertain and attest the evidence of divine commission possessed by the party, for the purpose of protection against the intrusion of such as Christ has not sent. The value of the ordinance is, therefore, mainly dependent on the faithfulness of the Church to her trust, and consequent presence with her, and guidance of the Spirit.

Acts i. 24; vi. 3–6; xiii. 2, 3.

§ 241. What is signified by the laying on of hands in Ordination?

By the laying on of hands is signified the presentation of the person, as an offering dedicated by the Church, to minister on its behalf in the service of God.

Num. viii. 10, 11, 13, 15, 21; Compare Lev. xvi. 10, 21, and Num. viii. 12.

§ 242. To whom is Ordination to be given?

Ordination is to be given to none but those in whom, upon careful inquiry and trial, there appears sufficient scriptural evidence that they have been qualified and called by Christ to the service to which they are to be set apart.

1 Tim. v. 22; iii. 2–15; Tit. i. 5–11; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 8, 11.

§ 243. Does Ordination, of itself, confer a right to claim the prerogatives of the ministry?

Ordination is a solemn and official attestation by the Presbytery, in the name and presence of the Holy Spirit, to the evidence which it recognizes in the elect officer, of a call to office from the Head of the Church. Of itself, it conveys to the party no moral right to the prerogatives of the ministry.

1 Tim. iv. 14; Acts i. 24; vi. 3–6; xiii. 2.

§ 244. What is the position of such as may be ordained, without a divine commission?

The gospel is not dependent for its virtue upon the worthiness of the earthen vessels through which it is conveyed; but upon the faith of those who receive it. So that the Word preached and the Sacraments administered by such persons, if dispensed according

to the rule of Christ, are valid, and effectual to the edifying and salvation of believers; whilst the administrator is guilty, as an intruder into the sanctuary, and usurper of functions to which he has not been called.

2 Cor. iv. 7; Phil. i. 15–18; Rom. i. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 7; Jer. xxiii. 21, 32.

27. LEGISLATION AND DISCIPLINE.

§ 245. What is the legislative authority of Church courts?

Church courts have no legislative authority, in the proper sense. Their power is only ministerial and declarative of the will of Christ, as set forth in the Scriptures; which are the only authoritative rule of faith and manners. They should found all their decisions clearly upon these; and have no authority to bind the conscience in anything aside from, or contrary thereto;[1] but only to make such circumstantial regulations as may be necessary to fulfil the requirements contained in the written Word.[2] In the faithful execution of this office, they are entitled to reverence and obedience, as well because they are an ordinance of Christ hereto appointed,

as because of the propriety of the conclusions to which they may come.[3]

[1] Above, §§ 79, 89; Isa. xxxiii. 22; James iv. 12; Rom. xiv. 4; 1 Cor. v. 4, 5; 2 Pet. i. 19; Mat. xv. 3. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 13, 14; xiv. 26, 40. [3] Acts xv. 28; Mat. xvi. 19; xviii. 17, 18; John xx. 21–23.

§ 246. What is church discipline?

Church discipline is the exercise of authority, for the prevention and correction of offences and the maintenance of the purity, order and peace of the Church and the honor of Christ.

2 Cor. x. 8; 1 Cor. v. 5; 1 Pet. i. 14–16.

§ 247. How is discipline exercised?

Discipline is exercised by the courts of the Church, by guarding the door of admission to her communion,—by inspection of the lives and conduct of the members,—by paternal warnings and admonitions,—and by the trial and censure of offenders.

Acts xx. 28; Heb. xiii. 17.

§ 248. What is the criterion of admission to the Church?

The criterion of admission to the Church is professed faith and repentance, accompanied with a corresponding life and conduct.

Mark xvi. 16; Acts ii. 38; viii. 37; xx. 21; xxvi. 20; Matt. iii. 7–9.

§ 249. Is every sin a proper subject of judical censure?

As there is none that sinneth not, there must be sins of such a nature as do not interfere with good standing in the Church; although every observable sin is a proper subject of admonition from the Elders.[1] But an offence, the proper subject of judicial discipline, is anything in the principles or practice of a church member, which is an actual and open violation of the law of God, directly calculated to ensnare others, to mar the edification of the Church, or to dishonor God and cause the enemy to blaspheme.[2]

[1] 1 John i. 8, 10; 1 Thes. v. 12; [2] 2 Pet. ii. 1; 1 Cor. viii. 12; 2 Sam. xii. 14.

§ 250. How many classes of offences are there?

There are three classes of offences,—heresies in doctrine,—immoralities in practice,—and violations of church order; including, untenderness toward the brethren, neglect of the ordinances and of official duties, disrespect toward the ministry, and resistence against the authority of the Church.

Gal. i. 8, 9; 1 Cor. v. 11; Rev. ii. 14; Rom. xiv. 13; Acts xv. 38; 2 Thes. iii. 6, 14, 15; 1 Thes. v. 12, 13.

§ 251. What remedies has Christ provided against offences?

For the correction of offences, Christ has appointed various degrees of censures, to be administered by those having rule in the Church. These include private and public exhortation, admonition, and rebuke; suspension from the privileges of the Church, and excommunication.

2 Thes. iii. 14, 15; 1 Tim. v. 20; Tit. i. 13; 1 Cor. v. 5, 13.

§ 252. What is to determine the degree of publicity of rebukes?

Offences are not needlessly to be published; but the censure should be proportioned to the magnitude and notoriety of the offence; so that admonition and rebuke may be administered to the offender, alone, in the family, in the Session, or before the whole Church.

Mat. xviii. 15–17; 1 Tim. v. 1, 19, 20.

§ 253. In what cases is suspension proper?

In flagrant cases of scandal, which cannot be brought to immediate decision, a cautionary suspension may be enforced, pending the

trial; and in many cases of offence, suspension may be proper upon conviction, with the hope of repentance and restoration.

2 Thes. iii. 14, 15.

§ 254. What is Excommunication?

Excommunication consists in cutting off the offender, utterly, from the fellowship of the Church, and delivering him over to Satan, whose service he has preferred to that of Christ.

1 Cor. v. 5, 13; Gal. v. 12.

§ 255. In what cases is Excommunication proper?

Excommunication is proper when offences are of such a character, or have been followed by such a course of conduct as precludes the hope of repentance, and justifies the conviction that the offender is given over to a reprobate mind.

Mat. xviii. 17.

§ 256. What is the effect of excommunication?

The sentence, when pronounced in the fear of Christ, and in accordance with his Word, is ratified in heaven. Christians are bound as far as possible, to withdraw from all social familiarity with the excommunicate.

Satan receives power over him. He is given up to the terrors of conscience, or to a yet more dreadful blindness of mind and hardness of heart;—and if peculiar grace does not work in him new repentance and faith, the sentence of the Church will be rehearsed and ratified, in the judgment of the last day.

1 Cor. v. 5, 11; 1 Tim. i. 20; Mat. xviii. 18; John xx. 23; Heb. x. 26, 27.

§ 257. By whom are scandals to be tried and censures inflicted?

The discipline of the Church is to be exercised by the Eldership to whose jurisdiction the offender belongs;[1]—in the case of private members, therefore, it is appropriately assigned to the parochial Presbytery; and in the case of ministers to the classical Presbytery.

[1] Deut. xix. 12; xxi. 19; 1 Cor. v. 1, 4, 5.

§ 258. What is the law of evidence in judicial cases?

Two or three witnesses are necessary, to establish any charge; and, if it be required, the witnesses are to be put upon oath, as to the truth of their testimony.

Deut. xix. 15; Mat. xviii. 16; 1 Tim. v. 19; Heb. vi. 16, 17; Mat. xxvi. 63, 64.

§ 259. What provision is made for the correction of erroneous decisions?

The mistakes of inferior courts may be corrected, by appeal to those of wider jurisdiction.

§ 260. Is such superior jurisdiction of divine right?

The doctrine of the unity of the Church involves the subordination of the parts, in judicial cases, as well as in all others; whilst the analogy of the Synagogues and Sanhedrim, and the example of the Council of Jerusalem concur to the same conclusion.

1 Cor. xii. 25, 26; Above, §§ 119, 225–231.

28. PRIVATE CHRISTIANS.

§ 261. What are the rights of individuals with reference to personal religion?

It is the right and duty of every individual, for himself, to read and study the Word of God, and ascertain the way of salvation therein set forth,[1]—by faith, to lay hold of and appropriate to himself that salvation and all the promises,[2]—and to come before the throne of God with boldness, in the name of Christ, and independent of all human instrumentalities and mediators, and there make

his confessions and offer his prayers and praises, with assurance of acceptance and salvation.[3]

[1] John v. 39; Acts xvii. 11; 2 Pet. i. 19–21. [2] Rev. xxii. 17. [3] Rom. x. 12, 13; Eph. iii. 12; Heb. x. 19–22; Ps. l. 23; John xiv. 6; 1 Tim. ii. 5.

§ 262. What part is assigned to them in the public worship?

The ordinance of song in the sanctuary is appointed as a means of enabling the whole Church to unite in open and joyous testimony to the world, of the grace and glory of her God; and of admitting each worshipper to join personally in the noblest and most honorable of all the exercises of religion,—the high praises of Jehovah; and it is the right and duty of every Christian to join therein with heart and voice.

Ps. xxxiii. 1–3; cv. 2; Eph. v. 19; Col. iii. 16; Ps. cl. 5, 6.

§ 263. Should those be required to sing who have no voice for music?

Defective voice is too often consequent upon neglect of culture, induced by criminal indifference to the privilege and duty. But concert in utterance and song has a power

over the devotional feelings which, no doubt, was the motive that actuated the Head of the Church, in appointing this ordinance; and, whilst no one should so join as to interrupt the harmony, and mar the edification of others,—the most feeble and imperfect voices may share in the privilege, by a subdued utterance, which will swell the song, without derogation to the harmony.

Ps. l. 23; lxvii. 3–5; Heb. xiii. 15.

§ 264. What are the duties of private Christians toward others?

It is the duty of private Christians to be ready always to give to every one that asketh them, a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear; to watch for and use all suitable occasions to press upon the impenitent the free grace of Christ; to employ their means in relieving the temporal wants of the destitute; and, as they have opportunity, to do good to all men.

1 Peter iii. 15; Rev. xxii. 17; Heb. xiii. 16; Gal. vi. 10.

§ 265. What are the principles of Christian charity and beneficence?

They are,—that the fruits of our labors are not to be hoarded, but employed in doing

good; since they are not our own, but lent to us as stewards of God's manifold grace;[1] that he who has the means and fails to relieve the wants of the needy, has reason to regard himself as destitute of the grace of God;[2] whilst he who, actuated by the love of Christ, employs his means in the service of God and works of beneficence, is thus laying up treasure in heaven;[3] that the gifts of God's people are to be bestowed for the support of the ministry, at home,—the dissemination of the gospel to the destitute,—and the supply of the necessities of the poor;[4] and that contributions of charity are appropriate to the Lord's day.[5]

[1] Mat. vi. 19, 21; Eph. iv. 28; 1 Pet. iv. 9, 10. [2] 1 John iii. 17. [3] Mat. xix. 21; Luke xii. 33–35; xvi. 9–13; Heb. xiii. 16. [4] Above §§ 172, 173; Mark xvi. 15; Rom. x. 15; Acts xiii. 2, 3; Phil. iv. 15–19; 1 John iii. 17; Mark x. 21; Gal. ii. 10. [5] 1 Cor. xvi. 1–3; Phil. iv. 18.

§ 266. What is the prerogative of private Christians, as to the Word preached?

It is the right and duty of private Christians to try both preachers[1] and their testimony,[2] by the written Word of God; and,

whilst reverently and in a humble and teachable spirit, they receive that which accords therewith,—to reject and avoid whatever is contrary thereto.[3]

[1] Mat. vii. 15, 16; xxiv. 24; 1 John iv. 1; Rev. ii. 2. [2] 1 Thes. v. 20, 21; Gal. i. 7–9. [3] Heb. xiii. 17; Rev. ii. 20–24; 2 John 9–11; 3 John 11; Rom. xvi. 17.

§ 267. What authority have they in the appointment of church officers?

Whilst it is the office of the Eldership to try and ordain all ecclesiastical officers, it is the right of the people, under this limitation,[1] to elect those who are to serve them in the Lord.[2]

[1] 1 Tim. v. 22. [2] Acts vi. 3; xiv. 23,—"ordained,"—Original, "with voting, constituted;" Above, § 76.

29. OF FAMILY RELIGION.

§ 268. What relation does the family sustain to the Church?

Not only did the visible Church originate in the family of Abraham, but the family still continues to be a fundamental and essential element of the Church, and nursery for it.

Acts ii. 39; 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5; Eph. v. 21–33; vi. 1–4; Col. iii. 18–22; 2 John 4.

§ 269. What is the nature of the parental office?

The parent is the bishop, the prophet and king of his family, ordained of God to exercise these offices to all who belong to his household, and endowed with the sanction of divine authority in fulfilling them.

Eph. vi. 1–4; 1 Tim. iii. 4; Ex. xx. 10.

§ 270. What are the principal religious duties of parents toward their children?

It is the duty of parents to dedicate their children to God,[1]—to bring them early to baptism,[2] to teach them to know God, to pray to him, to read his word, and to attend upon the public ordinances of the sanctuary,[3] to exercise government and discipline upon them in love; and to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; maintaining the stated worship of God in the house.[4]

[1] Gen. xvii. 18; Mark x. 13, 14. [2] Above, §§ 36–39, 179–186. [3] Gen. xviii. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15. [4] Prov. xiii. 24; xxii. 15; Eph. vi. 4; Gen. xii. 7; xiii. 4, 18; xxi. 33; xxxv. 1–4, 7; Deut. vi. 7; Job i. 5.

§ 271. What reward is promised to faithfulness in these duties?

God's truth is pledged, in the covenant sealed by Baptism, that those who, in their youth, are trained faithfully in the right way, shall continue to walk therein, to old age; and that he will be their God.

Gen. xviii. 19; Prov. xxii. 6; Ps. xcii. 13–15; Gen. xviii. 19; xvii. 7; Acts ii. 39.

30. THE TRUE CHURCH.

§ 272. Is the Church actually organized upon the scriptural model?

The ignorance, blindness, and corruption which still infect the best and purest Churches, have caused errors and divisions which mar the symmetry and unity of the body of Christ. Nor will it be otherwise until the promised day when the Spirit shall be poured out, when all shall know the Lord, and the watchmen shall see eye to eye.

1 Cor. xi. 18, 19,—"heresies,"—Original, "sects;" Isa. lii. 8.

§ 273. May the order of the Church be disregarded for the sake of Christian union?

Any neglect or violation of the order of God's house is a transgression of the law of Christ, by which that order is established, and a disregard of the authority of his Spirit, by whom it is attested in the Word. It cannot, therefore, inure to the unity of the Spirit, which is the only bond of peace, and without which no other union is of any value. It tends, not to edification, but to destruction.

1 Tim. iii. 15; 1 Cor. xi. 34; xiv. 40; Tit. i. 5; Eph. iv. 3; Isa. lxiii. 10; Rom. xvi. 17.

§ 274. What then is the present duty of Christians with respect to union?

It is the duty of Christ's people, as much as in them is, to harmonize differences by the light of revelation; and whereunto they have already attained, to walk by the same rule and mind the same things; whilst they adhere, as closely as possible, to the revealed constitution of the Church; as well as to the Scriptural doctrines of grace.

1 Cor. i. 10; iii. 3; Phil. iii. 16; 1 Tim. iii. 15; 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

§ 275. Are all professedly Christian Churches truly such?

There may be and doubtless are many

claiming to be true Churches, which are in fact no Churches of God at all; but synagogues of Satan.

Rev. ii. 9; iii. 9, 19; 2 Thes. ii. 3.

§ 276. May Christians safely continue in such Churches?

Connection with such Churches cannot be retained, without great peril to the soul, and injury to the name of Christ; and his people are, therefore, enjoined to separate themselves from all such.

2 Cor. vi. 17; Rev. xviii. 4; Acts xix. 9.

§ 277. How is the true Church to be distinguished from the false?

The true Church is to be known by its fidelity to its commission as a witness for God. Wherever the gospel of Christ is faithfully preached and heard, and the testimony sealed by a due administration of the Sacraments according to the institution of Christ, there it is not to be doubted is a true Church of Christ.

Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Rev. xxii. 17; Eph. ii. 19–22.

§ 278. What is the duty now incumbent on the Church in the world?

The visible Church was erected by Christ

as an agency to keep the oracles of his truth, to nourish in her bosom the children of his grace, and to publish the gospel to all nations. Her organization, officers and order were appointed, and, in the successive periods of her history, modified by his wisdom, to qualify her for this office.[1] To the same purpose is the Spirit in her given; grace bestowed upon her ministers; and this world's goods upon her members.[2] To her, and her only, has He given commission to that effect; commission sealed and perpetuated by the last words of her ascending Saviour.[3] For lack of that knowledge and grace which her ministrations impart, the world is perishing. Her one great privilege and duty therefore is, by the unreserved dedication of the resources of her members and talents of her ministry, by her fervent prayers and unwearied labors at home and abroad, to make known the gospel to every creature under heaven, in the fulness of its persuasive sweetness and saving power.

[1] Rom. iii. 2; Acts xx. 28; Eph. iv. 11–13; 1 Cor. xii. 27, 28; Gen. xii. 3; Mark xvi. 15. [2] 1 Cor. xii. 4–13; Luke xxiv. 47–49. [3] Above, § 140, Acts i. 8, 9.

§ 279. May the Churches surrender to other societies the dispensation of the gospel?

Every branch, if it be indeed of the true Church, is severally involved in the duty and responsibility imposed by the great commission;—a duty to be performed by that organism with which she has been to this purpose endowed by Christ; and a responsibility which can only be met under the direction and agency of those officers whom He has commissioned and sent for her guidance and government. Only in the faithful performance of the work thus set before her can she expect the continued smile of her Head and presence of his Holy Spirit. The erection, therefore, of other bodies not subject to the rulers and courts which Christ has set in the Church, and assumption to them of an independent agency in the work of evangelization, implies the voluntary surrender of her office, by the Church, or her exclusion from it; and is, in either case alike, indefensible and fatal to her prosperity and growth. It farther involves the alternative assumption, that the Churches whose work is thus undertaken, are not organized after the mind of

Christ, or, that the wisdom of the parties has devised a better means for accomplishing his purposes, than that ordained by the Son of God.

1 Tim. iii. 15; Mat. xxviii. 19, 20; Eph. iv. 4, 11–16.

§ 280. Is the past an adequate illustration of the future of the Church?

The past history of the Church has been a faint-hearted and feeble struggle for existence, rather than an assertion of her prerogative and entrance on her inheritance. But the day of darkness, of barrenness and bondage is destined to pass away. She will yet arise, shake herself from the dust, put on strength and beautiful garments, ascend the throne and inherit all nations. The kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.

Isa. liv. 1–13; lii. 1, 2, 10; Dan. vii. 27

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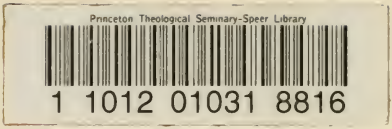
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